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## Differences in Social Media Profile Picture Selection Motivation: A Comparison Between Chinese and U.S. Users

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## ABSTRACT

The goal of this research is to explore the differences in the motivation of profile picture selection on social media using survey methodology. Prior research regarding profile pictures has focused on the reception of users, but the motivations behind choosing profile pictures remain unanswered. The study focuses on the profile pictures selecting process, which is the process behind users' choice of pictures that appear with their name and biography on social media accounts. The study will compare social media users in China and the United States to explore whether users from different cultural backgrounds (i.e., independence or interdependence) report different profile picture motivations (i.e., self-expression, self-awareness, social belongingness, and impression management), and whether these motivations and cultural orientation result in different preferences for types of profile pictures (e.g., romantic, socialize, close up).

*Keywords:* social motivation, profile picture, self-presentation, cultural orientation

DIFFERENCES IN SOCIAL MEDIA PROFILE PICTURE SELECTION MOTIVATION: A  
COMPARISON BETWEEN CHINESE AND U.S. USERS

by

Ruochen Jiang

B.A., China Agricultural University, 2015

Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts in Media Studies.

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# Differences in Social Media Profile Picture Selection Motivation: A Comparison Between Chinese and U.S. Users

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

This study explores the differences in the motivation of profile picture selection on social media between Chinese and U.S. users to learn the reason people select certain profile pictures. It will also try to understand if the motivation of selecting profile pictures varies because of cultural orientation and if these motivations predict the types of profile pictures users select.

The term profile picture refers to the image that appears with the user's name on his or her biography page on social media accounts. The profile picture represents users online (Brunskill, 2013). It is also the first picture potential friends see before becoming actual online contacts (Wu, Chang & Yuan, 2015). These pictures are the most important visual element on a social media profile page (Dewey, 2015). In this way, it becomes a place for identity construction in the Web 2.0 environment (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009).

Baumeister and Hutton (1987) state, "[S]elf-presentation is behavior that attempts to convey some information about oneself or some other image of oneself to others" (p.71). As social media is where people can share information (Guidelines: Social Media and Electronic Communication, 2012, p.2), people can present their own information, such as their characters and interests to their social media contacts in this context. Additionally, people-to-people interactions happen every day and individuals show an ideal image on their social network (Goffman, 1959). Thus, it is possible for people to present their ideal image on social media. Although profile pictures may remain hidden, profile pictures still allow users to express themselves in the online presentation environment (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). In addition, when selecting profile pictures, users can present themselves by controlling which profile picture is to



be selected (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). Thus, as the profile picture is how users present themselves to audiences (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006), it is an essential part of the online presentation (Salimkhan, Manago & Greenfield. 2010).

The previous research related to profile pictures focused on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. It examines body image, age, gender of the person's profile picture and the effect on viewer's perceptions of the profile pictures' owners (Flynn, 2016; Kapidzic & Herring, 2011; Read, Pavelko & Hwang, 2017). By viewing other users' profile pictures, people are likely to unconsciously and personally judge the owners based on their profile pictures (Dewey, 2014). There might be many factors that drive people to select their profile pictures, and the current study will focus on the social motivations of social media users' profile picture selection.

Some research focuses on the motivation of social media use (Lee et al., 2015), motivation of self-presentation (Bergman, Fearington, Davenport, & Bergman, 2011), personality and profile picture (Wu, Chang & Yuan, 2015), and motivation of profile picture selection on social media (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). Users from different cultural backgrounds will use the Internet differently and their motivations vary (Vasalou, Joinson & Courvoisier, 2010). However, few researchers have investigated the international differences in social motivations for choosing profile pictures. The previous research has not focused on the specific countries and has avoided comparisons between different countries (Midha & Nandedkar, 2012; Wu, Chang & Yuan, 2015). In addition, most of the studies investigate the most popular platform, Facebook (Wu, Chang & Yuan, 2015; Zheng, Yuan, Chang, & Wu, 2016). However, other platforms should be analyzed as well.

The current research will integrate self-presentation theory, social motivation, and cultural orientation to better understand why people choose specific types of profile pictures. The purpose of the study is to test the theory of self-presentation, examining the extent to which social motivation affects users' profile picture selection and their preference of selecting certain type of photos for profile in a computer-mediated-communication context.

The key concepts of this study are the social motivation, cultural orientation, and photo trends. Social motivation falls into four variables- self-expression, self-awareness, social belongings, and impression management. Cultural orientation falls into two variables- independence (IND) and interdependence (INT). Photo trends consist of 11 different types of profile pictures. This study uses self-presentation as the framework to examine correlations between social motivation, cultural orientation, and photo trends, and helps to fill a research gap on the influence of cultural orientation on the motivation of profile picture selection. In order to figure out the different factors that affect Chinese and U.S. users' social media profile picture selection motivation, and how it influences photo selection preference, the current research asked users in China and the United States about their considerations when picking a profile picture for their favorite social media platforms.

Chapter 2 will describe the theories and research regarding profile pictures to demonstrate the overall need for this research and the associated hypotheses including the social motivations for profile picture selection, cultural orientation and picture trends. Chapter 3 will present the methods, including variables, sample, procedure, and ethics. Chapter 4 will present the data and analyses. Chapter 5 will discuss the findings and implications for future research.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

In this chapter, the researcher will review the social motivations for profile picture selection from four dimensions: self-awareness, self-expression, social belongingness, and impression management. The research on cultural orientation and picture trends will also be reviewed.

### **Social Media**

Social media are “Internet technologies that allow people to connect, communicate and interact in real time to share and exchange information (text, photographs, images, video or audio files)” (“Guidelines: Social Media and Electronic Communication,” 2012, p.2). Social media is an outcome of Web 2.0, or the second phase of the World Wide Web evolution, which allows users to engage in a more interactive and collaborative way, emphasizing the social interaction and collective intelligence among peers (Murugesan, 2007). Thus, social media provides a platform for the exchange of opinions and information.

According to Obar and Wildman (2015), “User-generated content is the lifeblood of social media,” and social media promotes the development of online social networks by connecting personal data and profiles with other individuals and groups of people (p.746). It creates an environment for Internet users to communicate online with their friends and acquaintances (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin, 2008). Users can publish and build identity through social networks and use it to express themselves and socialize (Ibrahim, 2009). Individuals can communicate with other individuals online directly, and create and modify content by users, making it possible for people with the same interests to establish social networks (Murugesan, 2007). Social media enables users to produce their own profiles, have their lists of contacts, and have virtual communication with them (Kasavana, Nusair, & Teodosic, 2010; Zhao, Grasmuck,

& Martin, 2008). According to the experience of using social media, users present themselves with the content that is most beneficial to them (Brunskill, 2013). This presenting process creates an online image (social avatar), which is “socially-derived and socially-driven” (Brunskill, 2013, p.527). When people apply their online images in the form of pictures, it is what we discussed as a profile picture.

Profile pictures, or the pictures that appear with users’ names and biographical information on social media accounts, are important. They are the visual element for users to construct their identity and represent themselves in the computer-mediated communication environment (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). With the advent of social media, users can freely present themselves and begin to create images for themselves or present their designed psychological character and human roles to others (Brunskill, 2013).

The motivation for selecting a profile picture on social media may be different across cultural orientation. “Cultures are diverse and dynamic social systems, not static monoliths. There is substantial heterogeneity among individuals within both individualistic and collectivistic systems” (Bandura, 2002, p.275). The use of the media depends on the social and cultural environment in which individuals acquire the fundamental values and norms that shape their social behavior (Kim, Sohn & Choi, 2011). The motivation for social interaction may vary from culture to culture, as the use of social media also reflects the dominant value of the culture from which the user originated. (Kim, Sohn & Choi, 2011). Thus, the use of profile pictures in online communication may be affected by cultural orientation. The cultural orientation in this context refers to the difference between social media use habits between independent culture and interdependent culture among Chinese users and the U.S. users.

The detail of the research questions and hypotheses will be shown at the end of this chapter after the definitions and literature reviews for all concepts.

### **Self-presentation theory**

Goffman first introduced the self-presentation theory in 1959 and indicated that people would act to establish their image in an interaction context. In order for others to understand themselves according to their own assumptions, people show a specific image to others (Goffman, 1959). Normally, people portray themselves as more socialized, that is, they adapt themselves to the perceptions and expectations of values of the society they are seeking to fit in to by adjusting their performance (Goffman, 1959). In order to fit in, their performance tends to incorporate and exemplify the value of mainstream social acceptance (Goffman, 1959). Different people have different reasons for selecting profile pictures; they use profile pictures to self-present (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006), but they are ultimately motivated by social norms.

The interactive nature of social media allows users to present themselves in a variety of online interactions by choosing their own profile pictures (Brunskill, 2013; Nowak & Rauh, 2008). A profile picture provides a creative platform for users to construct their identity on social media (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). People prefer to show their ideal image on social media and present themselves online differently than they present themselves offline (DeAndrea & Walther, 2011). Moreover, social media provides users with a place to use symbols and signs to construct their digital self-concept (Jensen Schau & Gilly, 2003).

Profile pictures may not reflect the real persona of the user and show the ideal image of users because they want to build a good impression for others. However, users' final decisions about profile picture selection are made by themselves (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). Users set profile pictures by choosing the picture that best represents them, but the picture may not be a

perfect representation of the individual; there is a gap between virtual self and real self (Brunskill, 2013), which leads some to express themselves and their real appearance through profile pictures, while others create a new persona via profile pictures (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009).

As users use their profile pictures to express one aspect of self, the use of the platform affects the user's choice. Social media platforms are varied, and users can use the same profile picture to express their identity on multiple platforms or use different profile pictures to create their identity for different occasions (Nowak & Rauh, 2008). For example, LinkedIn is mainly related to professional occasions; Snapchat is a website related to relatively private information exchanges, Instagram is essentially a photo-sharing social media platform (Wu, Chang & Yuan, 2015), WeChat is an instant messaging platform, and Zhihu (similar to Quora in the United States) is a question-based platform. The users may setup different profile pictures on these different platforms. Whereas the user's profile picture may be more physically attractive in a dating environment, the profile pictures in the game environment may be more related to the nature of the game, or the blogger user's profile picture is more open to interaction (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). People create impressions of others through visible features, while visual features of profile pictures can also produce impressions of others (Nowak & Rauh, 2008; Vasalou & Joinson, 2009). Thus, to shape the identity and manage the impression, users have their motivations to present pictures online (Sung, Lee, Kim & Choi, 2016).

### **Social Motivation**

Motivation is divided into intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Intrinsic motivation is when individuals are interested and attain pleasure from the thing itself, and extrinsic motivation indicates people do something because of the outcome from it

(Ryan & Deci, 2000). Lin and Lu (2011) suggest people use social networks for enjoyment, including online social relations. The Internet can expand the user's personal network, allowing users to interact more often, thereby creating a tendency for users to actively participate with each other (Wang & Chen, 2012). Therefore, social effects become an important structure in the context of pleasure-oriented information systems. That means people do the act of being interested and attaining pleasure from the Internet itself, which is intrinsic motivation. And users can also gain their needs by using social media, which is extrinsic motivation. Therefore, users' online behavior is motivated by their interests in online activities and the consequences generated by online activities.

Triplett (1898) proposed that the presence of others created a higher individual motivation. People portray themselves as more socialized; that is, they adapt themselves to the perceptions and expectations of values of the society they are seeking to fit in to by adjusting their performance (Goffman, 1959). An individual's decision is affected by opinion or behavior from others (Wang & Chen, 2012) and the term "social motivation" refers to the initiation of the process of an individual's behavior, the activation of the direction and motivation, and the influence of the close personal contact with other individuals on the individual's behavior (Geen & Shea, 1997). As Adamopoulos and Kashima (1999) indicated, motivation to perform behaviors is the first variable that influences the decision behavior. To fit in, individuals incorporate the value of mainstream social acceptance (Goffman, 1959).

On social media, different social motivations are the trigger of social media users' profile picture selecting behavior, which is the action— based on emotional preference, personal aesthetic values, and individual cultural taste— that happens in computer-mediated-communication context. Therefore, profile pictures are ultimately motivated by society. By

understanding the meanings of intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation and applying them to profile picture selection, people might be influenced by their needs to present themselves through profile pictures (intrinsic) or receive pressure from their social network in making a decision (extrinsic). The need for social belongingness, self-expression, impression management, and the improvement of self-awareness is influenced by social factors according to Goffman's self-presentation theory and may impact a user's process of selecting a profile picture.

### **Self-expression**

Self-expression is the display of the identity (Manning, 1992). As social media is both an information delivery platform and an information-creating place, users can create their own identity (Team, 2008). In this study, social media users use the profile picture as the tool to display themselves, a way of self-expression. Users' online expressions emphasize the self in certain aspects and can be edited by the users themselves (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013). Although people portray a real self-image online by using their own names, the existence of others affects the individual (Geen & Shea, 1997) and users express an idealized self-image to others. According to Seidman (2013), the opportunity of self-expression motivates the use of social media as a personal disclosure tool; people can satisfy themselves by expressing themselves online where they are seen by observers. Users describing their own identities via their profile and profile pictures is the virtual identity expression (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009) providing observers information about the user. All of these performances are a process of self-expression, which is how people express themselves in a computer-mediated-communication environment. Considering the cultural orientation, Kim and Sherman's study (2007) indicates that people from the United States think the purpose of expressing themselves is to express their thoughts, whereas people from Asia think the purpose self-expression is to maintain their



relationship with others. Thus, expression of personal internal attributes is more important to Americans than East Asians (Kim & Sherman, 2007). In addition, DeAndrea, Shaw, and Levine (2010) investigate the self-description expression among Facebook's "About Me" section. They found ethnic Asians show lower self-description expression than African Americans and Caucasian Americans.

### **Self-Awareness**

Self-awareness is the tendency to focus on one's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions in general (Sassenberg, Boos, & Rabung, 2005). Studies have shown that social networks interact with self-awareness and have an impact on self-awareness that is affected by personality (Nielsen, 2017; Qiu, Lin & Leung, 2010). In this context, self-awareness is the tendency for users to focus on themselves when selecting profile pictures for their social media accounts. The use of profile pictures has an impact on the self-awareness of individuals in the virtual space since the similar profile pictures can enhance the identification of the users (Midha & Nandedkar, 2012). As users construct themselves online, self-aware individuals attempt to visualize their appearance with profile pictures (Vasalou, Joinson & Pitt, 2007). They are aware of what they want to deliver and present to their audience. When the profile picture is more similar to the profile owner in reality, then the profile picture is more recognizable, and the profile owner has stronger self-awareness. In addition, this manifestation is also reflected in the profile owner's higher sense of responsibility and effectiveness (Midha & Nandedkar, 2012). After viewing the image of self, Western people may become self-aware and enhance their personal image in terms of appearance. However, East Asian people may activate their identity in a social aspect (Maister & Tsakiris, 2014).

### **Social Belongingness**

The sense of belonging is defined as the experience of an individual's participation in a system or environment so that one considers him or herself an integral part of the system or environment (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema & Collier, 1992). In a virtual environment, belonging is a feeling that members are a part of the virtual community (Zhao, Lu, Wang, Chau & Zhang, 2012). The need for belonging is a universal need that is strong, positive, and fundamental human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In this study, the social belongingness to different cultural backgrounds is seen as one of the motivations for people to choose social media profile pictures.

The formation and maintenance of human relationships are inherent to human society (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Social media networks can induce positive emotions by satisfying users' needs for belonging, thereby making them like using social media (Gao, Liu & Li, 2017). Social relationships satisfy belongingness and, as social network users become more closely connected with other users, their social network's sense of belonging is enhanced (Chai & Kim, 2012). Research shows that more people have a sense of belonging to online communities (Chou, Lin & Huang, 2016). Belongingness is an important factor that influences user participation and is also a motivation for influencing knowledge sharing (Chai & Kim, 2012). A profile picture is a visual element on a profile page that presents users' identities on social media in their social network connections. Belongingness is also a motivation for identity and image sharing. With this sense of belonging, participants take care of each other and involve themselves in the activities of the online community (Zhao, Lu, Wang, Chau & Zhang, 2012). With the stronger sense of belongingness, the participants may internalize the social norm of the online community to direct their behavior (Zhao, Lu, Wang, Chau & Zhang, 2012). However, the degree of the

sense of belongingness may differ. In the collectivist culture, people may be motivated more by their social belongingness as they will adjust their behavior to be accepted by the society (Choi & Choi, 2002).

### **Impression Management**

Individuals try to control the impression that others perceive (Leary & Kowalski, 1990) and leaving a good impression is their fundamental motivation (Baumeister, 1982). According to Goffman (1959), people try to present themselves according to what they want others to see, meaning that people need to manage their own perceptions as what they want them to be in other people's eyes. Profile pictures play an important role in the process of managing one's impression (Hum et al., 2011). A previous study shows that the selection of profile pictures has an impact on the audience's impression of the user (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Another study finds most users are aware that different types of profile pictures leave a different impression on others and they choose a profile picture to influence the viewer's perception of them (Wu, Chang & Yuan, 2015). For example, women edit photos to increase their attractiveness (Hancock & Toma, 2009). Profile pictures become a tool or a stage for users to portray their images. Users manage their impression by presenting the appropriate profile picture and establishing a good image among their social media connections. In collectivism culture, the behavior of the individuals is motivated by the group, whereas in independence culture they motivate themselves. Thus, people from interdependence culture will pay more attention to their group and try to adjust their behavior to meet the group standard (Hofstede, 1980).

### **Cultural Orientation and Social Motivation**

Culture is the shared perception of the social environment that includes history and social systems as well as how "individuals internalize the norms, rules, and values in a society" (Kim,

Sohn & Choi, 2011, p.366). Culture influence how individuals communicate and shape behavior (Kim, Sohn & Choi, 2011) including the motivation for selecting profile pictures.

Hofstede (1980) divided cultural prototypes into individualism and collectivism. Individualism, present in the United States, Canada, and Australia, emphasizes that separate and unique individuals view themselves from an independent perspective. Collectivism, present in China and Japan, emphasizes social relations and social environments and looks at individuals from the perspective of interdependence (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997). This means that in collectivistic cultures, people will consider the acceptance of the society and adjust their behavior to fit the social environment (Choi & Choi, 2002).

Users from different cultures also reflect these two cultures in the use of social media. The methods of use of social networking sites are not universal, and users with different cultural backgrounds are driven by different motivations (Vasalou, Joinson & Courvoisier, 2010). Individualism is driven by personal preferences and internal factors, showing distinct favor and special needs that are unique (Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Whereas users from an individualistic culture may show their awareness of self in a social media context and would like to present themselves rather than anyone else. Users from a collectivist culture are driven by the needs and preferences of being close to others, and they show their similarities and their needs to blend in with society (Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Users from the collectivist culture may consider other people's ideas and thoughts, and manage their own behavior based on the online image they want themselves to be in other people's eyes. Kim, Sohn, and Choi (2011) found that social media users from an individualistic cultural background seek information and entertainment through short-term friendships with others, but users from collectivist cultural backgrounds hope to build long-term friendships for social purposes. This means people have different purposes to

maintain social connections. By considering these, users from different cultures will have different ways to achieve their purpose. Thus, when they are selecting profile pictures for their social media to present themselves, the methods they use to present themselves and the motivation to present themselves is different.

Sharma (2010) proposed a new scale to measure cultural orientation at the individual level: independence (IND) and interdependence (INT). IND represents individuals who have a strong self-concept and behave independently (Sharma, 2010). INT represents individuals who show a strong group identity and treat themselves as a part of the group (Sharma, 2010). As many studies of cross-cultural differences in consumer behavior have been based on the national scores of Hofstede's (1980, 1991) five cultural dimensions (i.e., individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation) when testing individual culture orientation of individual consumers, researchers question the validity of the national score using of Hofstede's cultural dimension as a measure of personal cultural orientation. At the same time, some research uses various self-report scales to measure personal cultural orientation values (Donthu & Yoo 1998; Furrer, Liu & Sudharshan, 2000). However, despite growing evidence that shows that individualism and collectivism are contrary, most of these scales treat each cultural factor as a one-dimensional construct, and they have little evidence that their validity is equivalent to cross-cultural measurement (Bearden et al. 2006; Taras et al. 2009). Some other studies have questioned the measurement equivalence and the dimensions (Li & Aksoy 2007; Sharma, 2010) of a classic scale called Horizontal–Vertical Individualism–Collectivism scale from Triandis and Gelfand (1998). Thus, Taras et al. (2009) offered the suggestion of developing a new scale that could measure the cultural orientation and cross-cultural consumer behavior at the individual level. Sharma (2010) reconceptualized the cultural dimension from Hofstede and

proposed independence and interdependence to represent these two negatively correlated dimensions based on the Hofstede's Individualism–Collectivism factor. In Sharma's (2010, p.790) study, independence (IND) is “a personal cultural orientation associated with acting independently, a strong self-concept, a sense of freedom, autonomy, and personal achievement,” and interdependence (INT) refers “a personal cultural orientation associated with acting as a part of one or more in-groups, a strong group identity, a sense of belongingness, reliance on others, giving importance to group-goals over own individual goals, and collective achievement” (Sharma, 2010, p.790).

Sharma (2010) conducted a scale validity study of 929 participants from China (including mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, etc.) and 648 participants from the West (including North America, Western Europe, and Australia/ New Zealand, etc.), and the results showed that IND and INT were statistically different for participants from China and the United States. Moreover, Chinese participants had a higher INT, while American participants had higher a IND. The results of IND and INT scores had a negative correlation. Thus, if we combine the scale of Sharma (2010) and the basic cultural concept from Hofstede (1980), people from a collectivist culture, such as China, will present a high INT cultural orientation, while people from individualist culture, such as the United States, will present a high IND cultural orientation.

### **Research Questions and Hypotheses**

By reviewing the previous study, the researcher expects to find respective to self-presentation and social motivation when considering Chinese social media users and American social media users. Thus, the researcher has the following research questions and hypotheses:

**RQ1: What are the differences in motivations to select profile pictures between social media users in the United States and China and to what extent are these differences related to differences in levels of independence (IND) and interdependence (INT)?**

When using social media, users are driven by different motivations (Vasalou, Joinson & Courvoisier, 2010). In the independent culture, people are driven by personal preferences or intrinsic factors, and they are more likely to demonstrate their own uniqueness (Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Because users feel pleasure when expressing themselves online (Seidman, 2013), when people select a profile picture, users will establish their own social media identity through self-expression. Self-awareness refers to people paying more attention to their own thoughts and feelings. Thus, when choosing a profile picture, self-awareness will drive people to visualize their appearance with profile pictures (Vasalou, Joinson & Pitt, 2007) because they are concerned that they present themselves based on their demands to be unique and satisfying their feelings. Considering that INT is present in China and IND is present in the United States (Aaker & Maheswaran, 1997), it is hypothesized that there will be differences between U.S. and Chinese users, such that:

**H1. American users will have higher self-expression (i.e., the displays of the identity) than Chinese users when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H2. American users will have higher self-awareness (i.e., the tendency to focus on one's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions) than Chinese users when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

In the INT culture, people often adjust their behaviors to better adapt to society (Choi & Choi, 2002). In the use of social media, the sense of belonging and closeness to the community will become the motivation for people from the INT culture (Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Therefore,

in the process of selecting the profile picture from the interdependent culture, the sense of belonging to the society will play a great role in promotion. Because people will perform themselves more in line with the universal value of society in order to fit in with the society (Goffman, 1959), the management of the impression will also affect the user's profile picture selection. Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

**H3. Chinese users will have higher social belongingness (i.e., one considers him or herself an integral part of the system or environment) compared with American users when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H4. Chinese users will have higher impression management (i.e., the process that tries to control the impression in which others are perceived) compared to American users when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H5a. Users who have greater INT will have lower self-expression when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H5b. Users who have greater IND will have higher self-expression when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H6a. Users who have greater INT will have lower self-awareness when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H6b. Users who have a greater IND will have higher self-awareness when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H7a. Users who have greater INT will have higher social belongings when selecting their social media profile pictures.**



**H7b. Users who have a greater IND will have lower social belongingness when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H8a. Users who have greater INT will have higher impression management when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H8b. Users who have a greater IND will have lower impression management when selecting their social media profile pictures.**

**H9. Chinese users will have a greater INT, while American users will have a greater IND when social media users select their profile pictures.**

**H10. National identity (i.e., the level of belongingness to the nationality) will be mediated by the IND / INT dimensions when social media users select their profile pictures.**

**RQ2: How do differences in cultural orientation and motivation predict differences in the types of profile pictures that users prefer?**

Given the lack of research regarding motivations and cultural orientation in selecting profile pictures, the researcher cannot generate hypotheses regarding the trends in profile picture types as correlated with these dimensions. However, by better understanding how motivations and culture come together to predict types of profile pictures, this may help explain overall differences between the U.S. and Chinese users.

This study will address the gap in research regarding the impact of cultural contexts on social motivation for profile picture selection in the social media environment by exploring the correlation of social motivation and cultural orientation. Furthermore, it will investigate how

people from different cultures select their profile pictures, how they present themselves online, and why they present themselves in this way. This study will also test the self-presentation theory in the computer-mediated-communication context by using a survey. The result of the study could provide a guide for social media observers to understand more about the picture owner's idea and the differences in motivation, explanation, and rationalization for selecting profile pictures between users from China and the United States.

This chapter has reviewed the previous research of self-presentation, social motivation, cultural orientation, and the arguments of these concepts related to profile pictures on social media. The next chapter will be the methodology section, which provides the operational definition and research method details including sample, recruitment, variables, and ethics.

### **Chapter Three: Methodology**

The purpose of this study is to explore the differences in the motivations of selecting profile pictures on social media between users from interdependent and independent cultures. This chapter will describe the methodology that will be employed in this study, including variables and their operationalization, sampling procedures, data collection, and anticipated analyses.

A quantitative survey was deployed. “A survey design provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population” (Creswell, 2014, p.13), and the results can be used to infer characteristics of the population. According to Babbie, a survey is a good way for “measuring attitudes and orientations in a large population” (Babbie, 2014, p.247). In this study, a cross-sectional design survey was conducted to collect data from social media users to examine the social motivations of their profile picture selection.

An online survey with a single choice multiple option method was conducted. Users’ profile pictures using behavior and users’ demographic information was collected among social media users in both China and the United States. Since surveys can be conducted online to get large samples without the limitations of geographic distribution, it is a good vehicle for the researcher to collect data and analyze attitudes (Babbie, 2014).

#### **Sample**

According to a report from Tencent, more than 85% of WeChat users were 18 to 35 years old in 2015 ("Decryption WeChat: WeChat Platform First Data Report", 2015). Ranging in age from 18 to 49, users’ accounts were 83% of the total number of users of Instagram in 2015

(Duggan, 2015). Thus, young adults are the main users of social media platforms like WeChat and Instagram. In addition, the usage of profile pictures is not limited to certain platforms. As China and the United States are two countries that have large numbers of social media users, it is valuable to investigate the profile picture difference between these two countries. Thus, the research sample was Chinese or American social media users aged 18 and above.

Recruitment: The survey was conducted through Qualtrics for respondents who currently live in the U.S. and report an American nationality. Respondents were recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk, a website consisting of 57% American users, 32% Indian users, and users from other countries who can request a survey or experiment with social science and be paid as an incentive (Ross, Zaldivar, Irani & Tomlinson, 2009). The survey was also translated to standard Chinese for respondents who currently live in China with a Chinese nationality and was conducted by Wenjuanxing for respondents in China, a website mainly for Chinese users to create, design and release their own surveys and investigations. The Chinese version of the survey questionnaire was published on social media platforms (see Appendix I for recruiting information). The questionnaires in Chinese and English are the same. The survey took respondents about 15 minutes to finish. Lastly, based on the average incentive for finishing a 15 minute-long survey in each country, respondents who completed the English survey earned \$1.50 as an incentive and respondents completing the Chinese survey earned ¥ 3.00 (about \$0.50) as an incentive.

This study employed a nonprobability sampling method. First, as it is reliant on available respondents, the social media platform is where the profile pictures selection behavior will happen. Thus, the student researcher will also release the survey on social media platforms, such as WeChat.

Sample size: Previous research, which focuses on Facebook profile picture behavior, has involved 200 to 400 respondents in the studies (Dahiya, 2016; Kapidzic & Herring, 2015; Ong, et, al., 2011). Thus, this study recruited 409 respondents. Considering the errors and missing data, there were 377 respondents who finished the survey. This survey collected information from both the Chinese language environment and the English language environment to better understand the cultural orientation between China and the United States among social media users' behavior. Finally, there were 218 respondents finishing the English version survey and 191 respondents finishing the Chinese version survey.

## **IRB**

The permission from IRB made sure all processes of the study were reasonable and legal. The current study got the exemption from regulation to collect data from respondents aged over 18. An exemption from regulation was also received in the international section to collect data from respondents aged over 18 who were living in China. The IRB determined that the research met the organization's ethical standards.

## **Procedure**

Data was collected by means of a questionnaire with a single choice multiple options method when the answer category was exhaustive and exclusive. This form of question was able to “provide a greater uniformity of responses and are more easily processed” (Babbie, 2014, p.249).

All the scales were adapted from previous research. Two dimensions for cultural orientation are interdependent culture context and independent culture context. Social motivation falls into four dimensions: self-expression, self-awareness, belongingness, and impression

management. Profile picture trends examine which type of picture is the preference in the profile picture selection process.

The survey was divided into three parts. The first part asked respondents demographic information, including age, gender, education, current living country (Chinese, America) and nationality (Chinese, American) to sift out the qualified respondents. If the respondents were under 18 or did not have a Chinese or American nationality, they did not have to finish the survey. Respondents then selected their favorite social media platform from a limited selection (see Table 1) and considered the motivations for selecting profile pictures on this social media platform and rate their agreement or disagreement with several scales assessing motivational dimensions. Finally, respondents rated their likelihood of choosing different types of profile pictures.

## **Variables**

Variables featured in the study are described below including the original source, the adaptation when applicable, the number of items and Likert scale dimensions, and the Cronbach's alpha (Ordóñez de Pablos, Tennyson, & Lytras, 2014) to indicate reliability for respondents responding in Chinese and respondents responding in English, overall. The alpha value should have been higher than 0.7 (Lai et al. 2011) to determine the stability and consistency of the measuring instrument (Choy, Ng & Chang, 2011). For scale that had more than one item, I averaged all items in the scale to create a composite, which range from 1 to 7 or 1 to 5 depending on the measurement.

National Identity: Three items were adapted from Scottham, Sellers, and Nguyễn's (2008) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity for teens (MIBI-t); respondents rated their agreement with these items on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly agree and 7 = strongly

disagree to assess the strength of their national identity (e.g., I feel close to other Chinese/American people; see Table 1 for full scale; Cronbach alpha Chinese = .717; Cronbach alpha U.S. = .886). The scale was reversed as 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree for analysis. The higher score respondents report, the more strongly they feel belongingness to their nationality.

Cultural Orientation: Hofstede discussed individualism and collectivism in *culture and organization* (1991) and indicated that societies are composed of different individuals and each of them have different values. One person can hold high individualism, high collectivism, or be high in both individualism and collectivism. Thus, we should treat them as two separate dimensions. Two subscales from Sharma (2010) were used to measure the cultural orientation; respondents rated their agreement with 10 items on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly agree and 7 = strongly to assess their level of interdependence (INT) (e.g., The well-being of my group members is important for me; see Table 1; Cronbach alpha Chinese = .767; Cronbach alpha English = .842; Cronbach alpha overall = .755) and independence (IND) (e.g., I would rather depend on myself than others; Cronbach alpha Chinese = .729; Cronbach alpha U.S. = .778). The scale was reversed as 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly disagree for analysis.

Self-expression: Self-expression is measured by using the s scale adapted from Escalas and Bettman (2005) by Taylor, Strutton, and Thompson (2012) to measure self-expressiveness, which measures the extent that people express themselves online. The scale is further adapted to fit context and used to measure self-expression of profile pictures selection. Respondents rated their agreement with five-items on a seven-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 7

= strongly agree to assess their level of self-expression (e.g., This profile picture reflects who I am; see Table 1 for full scale; Cronbach alpha Chinese = .922; Cronbach alpha U.S.= .931).

Self-awareness: To assess users awareness level of self while selecting profile pictures, a four-item, five-point Likert scale 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree is extracted from Sassenberg, Boos, and Rabung's (2005) private self-awareness scale by Schouten (2007) and modified to address self-awareness while selecting profile pictures (e.g. When I am selecting a profile picture, I reflected about myself; see Table1 for full scale; Cronbach alpha Chinese = .849; Cronbach alpha U.S.= .806).

Social belongingness: To assess social media social belongingness, a three-item subscale LaRose and Eastin (2004) adapted by Young and Len-Ríos Young (2017) was further adapted to assess social belongingness motivation when selecting a profile picture (e.g., To find something to talk about; see Table 1 for full scale; Cronbach alpha Chinese = .911; Cronbach alpha U.S.= .661). Respondents report their agreement by using a five-point Likert scale where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

Impression management: To measure the level of impression management motivation when social media users select a profile picture, a subscale was adapted from the extraction of Psycho-Social Aspects of Facebook Use (PSAFU) (Bodroza & Jovanovic, 2016), which is an eight-item, five-point Likert scale measure ranging from 1= strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree (e.g., I try to make a good impression on others by selecting a profile picture; see Table 1 for full scale; Cronbach alpha Chinese = .926; Cronbach alpha U.S.= .906). The language is modified to fit the context. The scale was reversed as 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree for analysis.



Likelihood of profile picture type: Respondents evaluated their willingness to select certain types of picture for their profile, ranging from 1 = extremely likely to 5 = extremely unlikely. There are 11 options: socializing, romantic picture, unique location, supporting cause, face shot, special occasion, posing alone, playing sports, family, interests, and humorous shot (Wu, Chang, & Yuan, 2015). The scale was reversed as 1 = extremely unlikely to 5 = extremely likely for analysis.

### **Pretest**

A pretest was conducted to attain a better understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of the design of questions. There were 51 (Chinese respondent  $N = 25$ , American respondent  $N = 26$ ) respondents (not included in final data) answering the questions and each of them received a \$1.50 (about ¥ 10) incentive for participating. However, there were just nine respondents with Chinese nationality now living in China. Considering that the current living environment might affect social media users' motivation when selecting profile pictures, the recruitment message for the following survey included that respondents should report a Chinese nationality and living in China or report an American nationality and living in the United States.

### **Data Analysis**

The current study is correlation exploration research, testing the correlation between cultural orientation, profile picture trends, and the social motivation for social media profile picture selection. The software SPSS was used in this research to analyze the data. Descriptive statistics (means, standard), correlations, and multiple regression statistic methods were deployed to investigate the relation between social motivation and cultural orientation, and whether these motivations and cultural orientation result in different preferences for types of profile pictures. In

order to test hypotheses one to four, two-tailed independent t-tests were conducted, and the means were compared for each hypothesis.

To test the relationship of cultural orientation to motivation (H5-10), multiple regression analyses were conducted with each of the scales used to measure four motivation dimensions as predictors. Baron and Kenny's (1986) suggest that by testing the regression model, the mediation effect can be examined if 1) the independent variable is significant, 2) the regression of independent to dependent variable is significant, and 3) the dependent variables on independent variables and mediator is significant. Therefore, to test hypothesis 5-10, the researcher used the mediation model to see if cultural orientation (i.e., IND verse INT) mediated the relationship between motivation and national differences. If there was significance for the relationship of cultural orientation to each motivation ( $p < .05$ ) and no significance for the relationship of national differences to each motivation ( $p > .05$ ), that means the national differences of users does not impact motivation after accounting for the variance from cultural orientation.

Finally, to answer research question 2, the researcher analyzed the correlation between cultural orientation and users' likelihood of profile picture types for respondents from each China and the U.S. respectively. The researcher also analyzed the correlation between motivation difference and users' likelihood of profile picture types.

### **Threats to Validity**

The survey was conducted online. However, the effort from respondents could not be guaranteed. Respondents got incentive by doing the survey as a reward to help increase respondents' attention.

The survey was conducted in two different languages. A Chinese survey was conducted by Wenjuanxing.com and an English survey was conducted by Qualtrics. This resulted in two separate data created after collecting data. Errors may exist when managing all the data together. In addition, as Mturk is a platform that has a lot of American users, the Chinese survey was published on social media platform WeChat so Chinese respondents might pay more attention to social media.

In addition, Internet censorship in China does not allow users access to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr. The English version survey includes the question related to those social media platforms, however, the Chinese version survey did not include them to protect the respondents. The questions for people from the two countries were not balanced.

## **Chapter Four: Results**

This chapter discusses the results of the survey conducted on the social media users aged 18 or above who report Chinese or American nationality and currently living in China or the United States. First, sample demographics are provided, followed by descriptive statistics for all variables. Then, the results show the statistical analysis for each hypothesis and answer the research questions about the differences between U.S. and Chinese social media users in their motivations to select profile pictures. The differences related to variance in levels of independence (IND) and interdependence (INT), and how do these differences predict the variation in the types of profile pictures that users gravitate towards.

### **Sample Demographics**

The respondents were recruited from both China and the United States. To qualify for this study, the respondents had to be 18 years or older, be social media users, report Chinese or American nationality, and currently live in China or the United States. Of the Chinese respondents, 18 claimed to be residing in America; no American respondents reported living in China, resulting in 377 respondents. In all, there were 172 Chinese respondents and 205 Americans. Respondents reported their gender identity as female ( $N = 190$ , 50.40%) and male ( $N = 183$ , 48.54%), and gender neutral ( $N = 1$ , 0.27%). Their education level was diverse, with 2.4% no schooling completed, 0.8% high school not completed, 6.1% high school completed or equivalent, 19.1% college credit, 1.1% trade/ technical/ vocational training, 5.8% associate degree, 45.1 % bachelor's degree, 17.2 % master's degree, and 2.1% doctorate degree. The currently enrolled student percentage is 31.8%.

Respondents were asked to report the average hours they spend per day on different media (see Table 5). After subtracting the number of respondents without appropriate data, the

average hours respondents spend on social media ( $M = 2.75$ ,  $SD = 2.20$ ) is higher than other media. Social media is the top time spend media in both China and the United States. However, the average hours Chinese respondents spend on social media ( $M = 3.20$ ,  $SD = 2.26$ ) is higher than the average hours American respondents spend on social media ( $M = 2.36$ ,  $SD = 2.08$ ).

The respondents were also asked to select their favorite social media platform among the platforms on which they have accounts (see Table 5). Among the respondents who are currently living in the United States, Facebook is the favorite social media platform, selected by 61.5% of the respondents. Among the respondents who are currently living in China, WeChat is the favorite social media platform which, selected by 52.3% of these respondents. The favorite social media platform among all respondents was Facebook (33.4%), followed by WeChat (23.9%), Weibo (11.4%), Instagram (7.7%), Reddit (7.2%), Twitter (4.8%), Zhihu (2.1%), BaiduTieba (0.5%), Tumblr (0.5%), and RenRen (0.3%). And 8.2% of the respondents selected “other” platforms as their favorite social media. Respondents who selected “other” as their favorite platform mention that they prefer Google+, Snapchat, and YouTube. Most people reported the average time they spend on their favorite social media is one to two hours ( $M = 2.93$ ,  $SD = 4.75$ ). The level of measurement is ratio.

An independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the cultural orientation scores for Chinese and American users. For IND of cultural orientation, there was a significant difference in scores for Chinese users ( $M = 5.79$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) and Americans users ( $M = 5.63$ ,  $SD = .92$ ;  $t(373) = 1.96$ ,  $p = .05$ ). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .16, 95% *CI*:  $-.001$  to  $.33$ ) was large (eta squared = .2). For INT of cultural orientation, there was a significant difference in scores for Chinese users ( $M = 5.76$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) and Americans

users ( $M = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ;  $t(371) = 2.98$ ,  $p = .003$ , two-tailed). The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .28, 95% *CI*: .10 to .46) was large (eta squared = .3).

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate if there are any statistical difference in cultural orientation (i.e. IND and INT) on the social motivations of selecting profile pictures among Chinese users and American users. For Chinese users, there were no statistically significant differences in cultural orientation mean scores between IND ( $M = 5.79$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) and INT ( $M = 5.76$ ,  $SD = .78$ ),  $t(171) = .57$ ,  $p = .57$  (two-tailed). For American users, there was a statistically significant differences in cultural orientation mean scores between IND ( $M = 5.63$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) and INT ( $M = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ),  $t(204) = 2.07$ ,  $p = .040$  (two-tailed). The mean differences in cultural orientation was .15 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from .007 to .292.

### **National Differences on Social Motivations**

H1. American users will have higher self-expression (i.e., the displays of the identity) than Chinese users when selecting their social media profile pictures.

Social media users' social motivations on selecting profile pictures were measured by different scales. For motivation of self-expression, there were five items scaled with 1 to 7, with 1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree. To measure self-expression, we used the average of the composite of five items with seven points. The average of the composite ranged from 1 to 7.

According to a 2-tailed independent sample t-test, Chinese users reported significantly lower self-expression as a motivation ( $M = 4.76$ ,  $SD = 1.39$ ) compared with American users ( $M = 5.47$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ),  $t(376) = -5.18$ ,  $p < .001$  (Table 3). Based on the guidelines proposed by Cohen (1988), the value size between .01 to .06 is small effect, from .06 to .14 is moderate effect, and larger than .14 is large effect. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference =

-.71) was large (Cohen's  $d = -.54$ ). Thus, hypothesis 1 is supported that American users have higher self-expression than Chinese users when selecting their social media profile pictures.

H2. American users will have higher self-awareness (i.e., the tendency to focus on one's thoughts, feelings, and perceptions) than Chinese users when selecting their social media profile pictures.

Self-awareness was measured by a four-item scale with 1 to 5, with 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. To measure self-awareness, the researcher use the average of the composite of four items with five points. The average of the composite ranged from 1 to 5. According to a 2-tailed independent sample t-test, there was no significant difference between Chinese users ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = .88$ ) and American users ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = .85$ ) on their reported self-awareness as a motivation for selecting profile pictures on their favorite social media platform,  $t(376) = .81$ ,  $p = .419$ . The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .07) was moderate (Cohen's  $d = .08$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 2 is not supported.

H3. Chinese users will have higher social belongingness (i.e., one considers him or herself an integral part of the system or environment) compared with American users when selecting their social media profile pictures.

Social belongingness was measured by a three-item scale with 1 to 5, with 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. To measure social belongingness, we use the average of the composite of three items with five points. The average of the composite ranged from 1 to 5. According to a 2-tailed independent sample t-test, there was no significant difference between Chinese users ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) and American users ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) on their reported social belongingness as a motivation for selecting profile pictures on their favorite social media

platform,  $t(376) = .78, p = .434$ . The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .08) was moderate (Cohen's  $d = .08$ ). Thus, hypothesis 3 is not supported.

H4. Chinese users will have higher impression management (i.e., the process that tries to control the impression in which others are perceived) compared to American users when selecting their social media profile pictures.

Impression management was measured by an eight-item scale with 1 to 5 with 1 strongly disagree to 5 strongly agree. To measure impression management, we use the average of the composite of eight items with 5 points. The average of the composite ranged from 1 to 5. According to the 2-tailed independent sample t-test, Chinese respondents reported significantly lower impression management ( $M = 3.45, SD = .85$ ) than American users ( $M = 3.74, SD = .85$ ),  $t(376) = -3.35, p = .001$ . This finding is counter to hypothesis 4. The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = -.29) was large (Cohen's  $d = -.35$ ). Therefore, hypothesis 4 is not supported.

### **Cultural orientation on Social Motivations**

Correlation analysis and multiple regression was used to assess the ability of the cultural orientation (i.e., IND culture and INT culture) to predict each motivation of profile picture selection (i.e., self-expression, self-awareness, social belongingness, and impression management), and compared with the ability of national differences (i.e., Chinese and American) to predict each motivation of profile picture selection. The cultural orientation was measured by using two five-item scales (1 strongly disagree to 7 strongly agree), with one measuring IND and the other INT. To measure the cultural orientation, we use the average of the composite of five items with 7 points of each dimension.



The 2-tailed Pearson correlation was conducted to see the correlations between cultural orientation and each motivation. For Chinese respondents (see table 4), self-expression ( $r = .37, p < .001$ ) has the highest correlation with INT, followed by impression management ( $r = .32, p < .001$ ), self-awareness ( $r = .31, p < .001$ ), and social belongingness ( $r = .27, p < .001$ ). Self-expression ( $r = .35, p < .001$ ) also has the highest correlation with IND, the following are social belongingness ( $r = .33, p < .001$ ), self-awareness ( $r = .314, p < .001$ ), and impression management ( $r = .308, p = .001$ ).

For American respondents (see table 4), social belongingness ( $r = .44, p < .001$ ) has the highest correlation with INT, followed by impression management ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ), self-expression ( $r = .41, p < .001$ ), and self-awareness ( $r = .38, p < .001$ ). Self-expression ( $r = .29, p < .001$ ) also has the highest correlation with IND, the following are self-awareness ( $r = .25, p < .001$ ), impression management ( $r = .18, p < .001$ ), and social belongingness ( $r = .06, p = .38$ ).

H5a. Users who have greater INT will have lower self-expression when selecting their social media profile pictures.

H5b. Users who have greater IND will have higher self-expression when selecting their social media profile pictures.

The standard multiple regression was conducted to assess the ability of cultural orientation (i.e. IND and INT) to predict levels of self-expression when selecting profile pictures among Chinese respondents and American users respectively. For Chinese respondents, after entry of the IND and INT, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was adjusted  $R^2 = 17.1\%$ ,  $F(2, 171) = 18.62, p < .01$  (see Table 6). The IND and INT measures were statistically significant on self-expression, with the INT recording a higher beta value ( $\beta = .27, p < .01$ )

than the IND ( $\beta = .24, p < .01$ ). The correlation between self-expression and both INT ( $r = .37, p < .01$ , Table 4) and IND ( $r = .35, p < .01$ ) are positive.

For American respondents, after entry of the IND and INT, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was adjusted  $R^2 = 17.9\%$ ,  $F(2, 203) = 23.07, p < .01$  (see Table 6). The INT measure was statistically significant on self-expression, with the INT recording a  $\beta$  value  $.35, p < .01$ . The IND measure was not statistically significant on self-expression, with the IND recording a  $\beta$  value  $.14, p < .01$ . The correlation between self-expression and both INT ( $r = .41, p < .01$ , Table 4) and IND ( $r = .29, p < .01$ ) are positive.

Thus, hypothesis 5a, which states that users who have greater INT have lower self-expression when selecting their social media profile pictures is not supported, whereas hypothesis 5b, which predicted users who have greater IND have higher self-expression when selecting their social media profile pictures, is supported among both Chinese and American respondents.

H6a. Users who have greater INT will have lower self-awareness when selecting their social media profile pictures.

H6b. Users who have a greater IND will have higher self-awareness when selecting their social media profile pictures.

As hypothesis 2 was not supported (there was no significant difference between Chinese users and American users on their reported self-awareness as a motivation for selecting profile pictures on their favorite social media platform), a standard multiple regression was conducted to assess the ability of cultural orientation (i.e., IND and INT) to predict levels of self-awareness when selecting profile pictures among Chinese respondents and American users respectively. For Chinese respondents, after entry of the IND and INT, the total variance explained by the model

as a whole was adjusted  $R^2 = 12.7\%$ ,  $F(2, 171) = 13.43$ ,  $p < .01$  (see Table 6). The IND and INT measures were statistically significant, with the INT recording a higher beta value ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than the IND ( $\beta = .22$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The correlation between self-awareness and both INT ( $r = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and IND ( $r = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are positive.

For American respondents, after entry of the IND and INT, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was adjusted  $R^2 = 14.3\%$ ,  $F(2, 203) = 17.99$ ,  $p < .01$  (see Table 6). The INT measure was statistically significant on self-awareness, with the INT recording a  $\beta$  value  $.33$ ,  $p < .01$ . The INT measure was not statistically significant on self-awareness, with the IND recording a  $\beta$  value  $.11$ ,  $p < .01$ . The correlation between self-awareness and both INT ( $r = .38$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and IND ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are positive.

Thus, hypothesis 6a, which states that users who have greater INT have lower self-awareness when selecting their social media profile pictures, is not supported, whereas hypothesis 6b, which predicted users who have a greater IND have higher self-awareness when selecting their social media profile pictures, is supported among both Chinese and American respondents.

H7a. Users who have greater INT will have higher social belongingness when selecting their social media profile pictures.

H7b. Users who have a greater IND will have lower social belongingness when selecting their social media profile pictures.

As hypothesis 3 was not supported (there was no significant difference between Chinese users and American users on their reported social belongingness as a motivation for selecting profile pictures on their favorite social media platform), a standard multiple regression was conducted to assess the ability of cultural orientation (i.e., IND and INT) to predict levels of

social belongingness when selecting profile pictures among Chinese respondents and American users respectively. For Chinese respondents, after entry of the IND and INT, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was adjusted  $R^2 = 12.0\%$ ,  $F(2, 171) = 12.70$ ,  $p < .01$  (see Table 6). The IND and INT measures were statistically significant, with the INT recording a lower beta value ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than the IND ( $\beta = .26$ ,  $p = .01$ ). The correlation between social belongingness and both INT ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and IND ( $r = .33$ ,  $p = .01$ ) are positive.

For American respondents, after entry of the IND and INT, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was adjusted  $R^2 = 20.5\%$ ,  $F(2, 171) = 27.17$ ,  $p < .01$  (see Table 6). The IND and INT measures were statistically significant, with the INT recording a lower beta value ( $\beta = .51$ ,  $p < .01$ ) than the IND ( $\beta = -.16$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The correlation between social belongingness and both INT ( $r = .44$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and IND ( $r = .06$ ,  $p = .38$ ) are positive.

Thus, hypothesis 7a, which states that users who have greater INT have higher social belongingness when selecting their social media profile pictures, is supported among both Chinese and American respondents, whereas hypothesis 7b, which predicted users who have a greater IND have lower social belongingness when selecting their social media profile pictures, is supported by American respondents, but not Chinese respondents.

H8a. Users who have greater INT will have higher impression management when selecting their social media profile pictures.

H8b. Users who have a greater IND will have lower impression management when selecting their social media profile pictures.

A standard multiple regression was conducted to assess the ability of cultural orientation (i.e., IND and INT) to predict levels of impression management when selecting profile pictures among Chinese respondents and American users respectively. For Chinese respondents, after

entry of the IND and INT, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was adjusted  $R^2 = 13.0\%$ ,  $F(2, 171) = 13.73$ ,  $p < .01$  (see Table 6). The INT measure was statistically significant on impression management, with the INT recording a *beta* value .23,  $p < .01$ . The IND measure was statistically significant on impression management, with the IND recording a *beta* value .21,  $p < .01$ . The correlation between impression management and both INT ( $r = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and IND ( $r = .31$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are positive.

For American respondents, after entry of the IND and INT, the total variance explained by the model as a whole was adjusted  $R^2 = 17.3\%$ ,  $F(2, 171) = 22.26$ ,  $p < .01$  (see Table 6). The INT measure was statistically significant on impression management, with the INT recording a *beta* value .43,  $p < .01$ . The IND measure was not statistically significant on impression management, with the IND recording a *beta* value .01,  $p = .92$ . The correlation between impression management and both interdependence ( $r = .43$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and IND ( $r = .18$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are positive.

Thus, hypothesis 8a, which states that users who have greater INT have higher impression management when selecting their social media profile pictures, is supported, whereas hypothesis 8b, which predicted users who have a greater IND will have lower impression management when selecting their social media profile pictures, is not supported among both Chinese and American respondents.

H9. Chinese users will have a greater INT, while American users will have a greater IND when social media users select their profile pictures.

The results of hypotheses 1-4 show that Chinese users reported significantly different self-expression and impression management as motivations compared with American users. The 2-tailed Pearson correlation between IND and INT is  $r = .44$ ,  $p < .001$ . According to the 2-tailed

independent samples t-test, Chinese respondents reported significantly higher INT ( $M = 5.76$ ,  $SD = .78$ ) than American users ( $M = 5.48$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ),  $t(375) = 2.91$ ,  $p = .004$ . The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .28) was large (Cohen's  $d = .30$ ). However, there was no significant difference between Chinese users ( $M = 5.79$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) and American users ( $M = 5.63$ ,  $SD = .92$ ) on their reported IND as their cultural orientation by doing the 2-tailed independent samples t-test,  $t(375) = 1.91$ ,  $p = .06$ . The magnitude of the differences in the means (mean difference = .16) was moderate (Cohen's  $d = .20$ ). Thus, hypothesis 9, which states that Chinese users will have greater INT, while American users will have greater IND when social media users select their profile pictures, is partially supported.

H10. National identity (i.e., the level of belongingness to the nationality) will be mediated by the IND / INT dimensions when social media users select their profile pictures.

As the results of previous paired-samples t-test show, American users do not show significant difference on IND and INT. Consequently, the researcher was curious if cultural orientation could mediate the effect of the national identity on motivation (See Figure 1 and Figure 2). A one-way between-groups analysis of variance was conducted to explore the impact of national identity on profile picture selection motivation first. For both Chinese and American respondents, there was a statistically significant difference at the  $p < .05$  level in all four motivations of profile picture selection (See Table 7). Hence, a hierarchical multiple regression was used to assess the ability of cultural orientation (i.e. IND and INT) to predict the motivation when selecting profile pictures, after controlling for the influence of national identity.

With Chinese respondents' self-expression motivation as the dependent variable, national identity was entered at Step 1, explaining 4.4% of the variance in self-expression. After entry of the IND and INT at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was  $R^2 = 16.6\%$ ,

$F(1, 170) = 8.82, p < .01$  (see Table 8). The cultural orientation explained an additional 12.2% of the variance in self-expression, after controlling for national identity,  $R^2$  squared change = .122,  $F$  change (2, 168) = 13.46,  $p < .001$ . In the final model, the two control measures were statistically significant, with the INT recording a higher beta value ( $\beta = .26, p < .01$ ) than the IND ( $\beta = .24, p < .01$ ). As national identity is no longer significant ( $p = .91$ ) when cultural orientation's influence on self-expression motivation is controlled. Thus, there is a full mediation effect on self-expression motivation when selecting profile pictures among Chinese respondents, that national identity is mediated by the IND / INT dimensions.

With Chinese respondents' self-awareness motivation as the dependent variable, national identity was entered at Step 1, explaining 3.6% of the variance in self-awareness. After entry of the IND and INT at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was  $R^2 = 12.2\%$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 7.40, p < .01$  (see Table 9). The cultural orientation explained an additional 8.6% of the variance in self-awareness, after controlling for national identity,  $R^2$  squared change = .09,  $F$  change (2, 168) = 9.34,  $p < .001$ . In the final model, the two control measures were statistically significant, with the INT recording a lower beta value ( $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ) than the IND ( $\beta = .22, p < .01$ ). As national identity is no longer significant ( $p = .75$ ) when cultural orientation's influence on self-awareness is controlled. Thus, there is a full mediation effect on self-awareness motivation when selecting profile pictures among Chinese respondents, that national identity is mediated by the IND / INT dimensions.

With Chinese respondents' social belongingness motivation as the dependent variable, national identity was entered at Step 1, explaining 8.1% of the variance in social belongingness. After entry of the IND and INT at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was  $R^2 = 13.7\%$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 16.17, p < .001$  (see Table 10). The cultural orientation explained

an additional 5.6% of the variance in social belongingness, after controlling for national identity,  $R$  squared change = .06,  $F$  change (2, 168) = 6.46,  $p < .01$ . In the final model, the IND measure was statistically significant on social belongingness, with the IND recording a *beta* value .24,  $p < .01$ . The INT measure was not statistically significant on social belongingness, with the INT recording a *beta* value .09,  $p = .33$ . As national identity remains significant when cultural orientation's influence on social belongingness is controlled. Thus, when selecting profile pictures among Chinese respondents, that national identity's influence on social belongingness is not mediated by the INT dimensions and partially mediated by the IND dimensions.

With Chinese respondents' impression management motivation as the dependent variable, national identity was entered at Step 1, explaining 14.6% of the variance in impression management. After entry of the IND and INT at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was  $R^2 = 18.1\%$ ,  $F(1, 170) = 30.28$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 11). The cultural orientation explained an additional 3.5% of the variance in impression management, after controlling for national identity,  $R$  squared change = .04,  $F$  change (2, 168) = 4.57,  $p < .05$ . In the final model, the IND measure was statistically significant on impression management, with the IND recording a *beta* value .17,  $p < .05$ . The INT measure was not statistically significant on impression management, with the INT recording a *beta* value .11,  $p = .19$ . As national identity remains significant when cultural orientation's influence on impression management is controlled. Thus, when selecting profile pictures among Chinese respondents, that national identity's influence on impression management is not mediated by the INT dimensions and partially mediated by the IND dimensions.

With American respondents' self-expression motivation as the dependent variable, national identity was entered at Step 1, explaining 10.8% of the variance in self-expression. After



entry of the IND and INT at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was  $R^2 = 18.9\%$ ,  $F(1, 202) = 25.70$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 8). The cultural orientation explained an additional 8.1% of the variance in self-expression, after controlling for national identity,  $R^2$  squared change = .08,  $F$  change (2, 200) = 11.08,  $p < .001$ . In the final model, the INT measure was statistically significant on self-expression, with the INT recording a *beta* value .28,  $p < .01$ . The IND measure was not statistically significant on self-expression, with the IND recording a *beta* value .13,  $p = .07$ . As national identity is no longer significant when cultural orientation's influence on self-expression motivation is controlled. Thus, when selecting profile pictures among American respondents, that national identity's influence on self-expression is not mediated by the IND dimensions and fully mediated by the INT dimensions.

With American respondents' self-awareness motivation as the dependent variable, national identity was entered at Step 1, explaining 10.3% of the variance in self-awareness. After entry of the IND and INT at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was  $R^2 = 15.8\%$ ,  $F(1, 202) = 24.20$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 19). The cultural orientation explained an additional 5.5% of the variance in self-awareness, after controlling for national identity,  $R^2$  squared change = .06,  $F$  change (2, 200) = 7.65,  $p < .01$ . In the final model, the INT measure was statistically significant on self-awareness, with the INT recording a *beta* value .10,  $p < .01$ . The IND measure was not statistically significant on self-awareness, with the IND recording a *beta* value .24,  $p = .17$ . As national identity remains significant when cultural orientation's influence on self-awareness motivation is controlled. Thus, when selecting profile pictures among American respondents, that national identity's influence on self-awareness is not mediated by the IND dimensions and partially mediated by the INT dimensions.

With American respondents' social belongingness motivation as the dependent variable, national identity was entered at Step 1, explaining 15.4% of the variance in social belongingness. After entry of the IND and INT at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was  $R^2 = 23.9\%$ ,  $F(1, 202) = 37.89$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 10). The cultural orientation explained an additional 8.5% of the variance in social belongingness, after controlling for national identity,  $R$  squared change = .09,  $F$  change (2, 200) = 12.32,  $p < .001$ . In the final model, the two control measures were statistically significant, with the INT recording a lower beta value ( $\beta = .39$ ,  $p < .001$ ) than the IND ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $p < .05$ ). As national identity remains significant ( $p < .01$ ) when cultural orientation's influence on social belongingness is controlled. Thus, there is a partial mediation effect on social belongingness motivation when selecting profile pictures among American respondents, that national identity is mediated by the IND / INT dimensions.

With American respondents' impression management motivation as the dependent variable, national identity was entered at Step 1, explaining 11.1% of the variance in impression management. After entry of the IND and INT at Step 2 the total variance explained by the model as a whole was  $R^2 = 18.5\%$ ,  $F(1, 202) = 26.30$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 11). The cultural orientation explained an additional 7.4% of the variance in impression management, after controlling for national identity,  $R$  squared change = .07,  $F$  change (2, 200) = 10.15,  $p < .001$ . In the final model, the INT measure was statistically significant on impression management, with the INT recording a  $\beta$  value .35,  $p < .001$ . The IND measure was not statistically significant on impression management, with the IND recording a  $\beta$  value -.01,  $p = .85$ . As national identity is no longer significant when cultural orientation's influence on impression management motivation is controlled. Thus, when selecting profile pictures among American respondents, that national

identity's influence on impression management is not mediated by the IND dimensions and fully mediated by the INT dimensions.

Thus, the hypothesis 10 is partially supported that national identity is mediated by the IND / INT dimensions when social media users select their profile pictures motivated for both Chinese and American respondents.

### **The Preference of the Types of Profile Pictures**

The relationship between cultural orientation and respondents' preference of the different types of profile pictures that they selected was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (see Table 4). Among the 11 types of profile pictures, there were correlations between cultural orientation and the types of photos. The level of measurement of photo preference is ordinal. For INT among Chinese respondents, the strongest, positive correlation was between INT and a humorous photo,  $r = .31$ ,  $N = 172$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of INT associated with more likely to use humorous as profile picture. The second strongest and positive correlation is between INT and playing sports photo,  $r = .29$ ,  $N = 172$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of INT associated with more likely to use sports photos as profile picture. For IND among Chinese respondents, the strongest, positive correlation was between IND and posing alone photo,  $r = .26$ ,  $N = 172$ ,  $p < .01$ , with high levels of IND associated with more likely to use posing alone photo as profile picture.

For INT among American respondents, the strongest, positive correlation was between INT and a family photo,  $r = .38$ ,  $N = 203$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of INT associated with more likely to use family as profile picture. For IND among American respondents, the strongest, positive correlation was between IND and interests photo,  $r = .13$ ,  $N = 203$ , *ns*.

In addition, by using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient, the researcher investigated the relationship between respondents' preference of profile picture types and motivations, and all motivations are correlated to 11 types of profile pictures (See Table 4). For Chinese respondents, the strongest, positive correlation among self-expression is between self-expression and posing alone photo,  $r = .42$ ,  $N = 172$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of self-expression associated with more likely to use posing alone photo as a profile picture. The strongest, positive correlation among self-awareness is between self-awareness and posing alone photo,  $r = .35$ ,  $N = 172$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of self-awareness associated with more likelihood to use special occasion photo as profile picture. The strongest, positive correlation among social belongingness is between social belongingness and playing sports photo,  $r = .31$ ,  $N = 172$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of social belongingness associated with more likely to use playing sports photo as profile picture. The strongest, positive correlation among impression management is between impression management and posing alone photo,  $r = .41$ ,  $N = 172$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of impression management associated with more likely to use posing alone photo as profile picture.

For American respondents, the strongest, positive correlation among self-expression is between self-expression and posing alone photo,  $r = .33$ ,  $N = 203$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of self-expression associated with more likely to use posing alone photo as a profile picture. The strongest, positive correlation among self-awareness is between self-awareness and special occasion photo,  $r = .32$ ,  $N = 203$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of self-awareness associated with more likelihood to use special occasion photo as profile picture. The strongest, positive correlation among social belongingness is between social belongingness and supporting cause photo,  $r = .39$ ,  $N = 172$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of social belongingness associated with more likely to use supporting cause photo as profile picture. The strongest, positive correlation among

impression management is between impression management and special occasion photo,  $r = .36$ ,  $N = 203$ ,  $p < .001$ , with high levels of impression management associated with more likely to use special occasion photo as profile picture.

The post hoc test was done to see if education (i.e. no schooling and high school, some college, undergraduate, and graduate) has influence on social motivation when selecting profile pictures for users' favorite social media platform. For Chinese respondents, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) on these scores again yielded significant variation among self-expression,  $F(3, 171) = 2.66$ ,  $p = .05$ . A post hoc Tukey test showed that the graduate and undergraduate differed significantly at  $p = .05$ . Respondents who report a graduate degree ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) are more likely motivated by self-expression than respondents who report the education level as undergraduate ( $M = 4.56$ ,  $SD = 1.33$ ) when selecting the pictures for their social media account. For American respondents, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) on these scores again yielded significant variation among social belongingness,  $F(3, 202) = 3.90$ ,  $p = .01$ . A post hoc Tukey test showed that the graduate and some college differed significantly at  $p = .008$ . Respondents who report a graduate degree ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) are more likely motivated by social belongingness than respondent who report the education level as some college ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = .96$ ) when selecting the pictures for their social media account.

## **Chapter Five: Discussion**

This study investigated the relationships between national, cultural orientation, and platform differences and motivations of selecting profile pictures on social media. To test the hypotheses, this research surveyed users from China and the U.S. regarding respondents' interdependence (INT) and independence (IND) levels and the level of each motivation when selecting a profile picture for their favorite social media. The results of the survey clearly revealed that Chinese and American users differ when selecting profile pictures, motivated by self-expression and impression management. The two dimensions of cultural orientation (i.e. IND and INT) are positively correlated. The results also showed the mediated effect of cultural orientation, apart from national differences, on the self-expression for selecting profile pictures among their favorite social media platforms. The relationship between platform differences and motivations was also tested. In addition, the types of pictures users were willing to select as profile picture were also investigated. Sports photo were favorites among INT persons, and pictures of persons posing alone were favorite among IND persons.

### **National and Cultural Orientation**

RQ 1 queried the influence of national differences and cultural orientation on the motivations of profile picture selection. To study whether difference in nationality would affect the selection of social media profile pictures, four hypotheses were tested. Results showed that national background can affect the self-expression motivation and impression management motivation of profile picture selection. Although the results for impression management are contrary to the hypothesis, they still show that Chinese users have lower impression management than American users when selecting profile pictures for their favorite social media platforms.

Results confirm that respondents' nationality influences their self-expression motivation on profile picture selection: American users have higher self-expression than Chinese users. This finding is consistent with previous research. Goncalo and Staw (2006) point out that individualism is driven by internal preferences and expressed in the need for "uniqueness." People also meet their own internal needs through self-expression (Seidman, 2013). In Hofstede's study (1984), Americans showed stronger individualism. This argument is consistent with the current findings. In other words, U.S. users in this study were more driven by self-expression when choosing social media profile pictures than Chinese users. Correspondingly American users are more likely to express themselves directly than Asian users on their homepage (Kim, & Papacharissi, 2003). In addition, results show that both Chinese and American respondents reported a high level of self-expression while selecting profile pictures. As mentioned in Goffman's (1959) self-presentation theory, people expressed themselves to others and delivered a message about themselves. People have a desire to express themselves to others. It may be influenced by cultural backgrounds but will not disappear because of cultural backgrounds.

Contrary to previous assumptions, Chinese respondents reported lower levels of impression management than those of the American respondents. Goffman's self-presentation theory asserts that people are willing to show others how they plan. They will socialize themselves so that they can better meet the expectations of the group they want to join. From this perspective, both Chinese and U.S. social media users have a desire to meet the needs of their community through impression management. Despite the assumption that Chinese users should exhibit a higher level of INT, they care more than American users about their own image in a social group, and thus impression management is more motivated. In addition, in a study of

cultural orientation in the use of social media, American students have shown a greater willingness to find new friends through social media in order to obtain self-satisfaction than students from Eastern culture (Kim, Sohn & Choi, 2011). In integrating social media and finding identity in this social group, users manage their image well to present themselves in the group better. Although the purpose of managing self-impression is to fit into the group, it is also a process of expressing their uniqueness and self-characteristics. However, the mean of impression management for both Chinese and Americans is lower than that of the other three motivations. This can be explained by the properties of social media. Social media give individual users the freedom and possibility to create their own content. Although social media users are still members of their society, they distinguish themselves from their society in real life. In addition, social media users can create online images on social media that have little impact upon their offline identities. They do not have to perform as well as they do in real life to meet the needs of mainstream society and be accepted by it. The examination of this hypothesis supports the self-presentation theory, but the impression management scale will be discussed further in the limitation section regarding whether the scale emphasizes independent impression management or interdependent impression management.

In the statistical sense, there is no significant difference in the self-awareness and social belongingness reported by Chinese and American respondents. This result shows that people's idea of privacy and the level of willingness to fit into society is universal. As people's use of social media interacts with self-awareness, people will be driven by self-awareness in the process of using social media. When choosing pictures, people will consider whether the picture reflects what they want to express and whether it reflects their inner feelings. This is the embodiment of self-awareness. Therefore, perhaps people's awareness of self will not be affected by nationality,



but is universal. In addition, because social media is not a private space, the information can be seen by many other users, including strangers so that privacy may be another consideration for social media users. By considering privacy, social media users may not use their photos or pictures to represent themselves in their profile pictures. They may not want to reveal too much about their real self to the public. The awareness of privacy may affect the awareness of self.

According to Goffman's self-presentation theory, a person's performance tends to be what mainstream society expects. To fit into society, both Chinese and Americans need to consider social belongingness in the social media environment, as elsewhere. Therefore, a higher sense of social belonging means that regardless of whether one is a Chinese or an American when selecting a profile picture, the influence of society on one's acceptance will be taken into account.

From the results of hypothesis 10, it can be seen that the cultural orientation has a stronger mediation effect on Chinese respondents than American respondents. When discussing self-awareness and self-expression, cultural orientation fully mediated the effect of national identity. Unlike traditional Chinese education, which promotes collectivism, in recent years, with the development of the economy, the spirit of individualized development and independence has been continuously advocated, especially among the younger generation. In education, a more independent spirit is also advocated. Therefore, cultural orientation has a relatively deep impact on people's behavior. Hence, when people choose social media profile pictures, which are behaviors of personal social image management, motivation is more susceptible to cultural orientation.

The mediation effect of cultural orientation also appeared to be a stronger predictor for Americans. One possible explanation is that the United States itself has a relatively diverse world

culture. Respondents from the United States themselves come from a more varied environment of cultural orientation. The inclusiveness and diversity of society make their cultural identity easier to be identified. As a result, individuals might show a more distinct cultural orientation to shape their social behavior.

In previous studies, people from Asia often exhibit a higher level of collectivism, and people from Europe and the U.S. often present a higher level of individualism (Hofstede, 1984). Individuals from different national backgrounds have different motivations when using social networks (Kim, Sohn & Choi, 2011). In the current study, Chinese respondents showed higher INT than American respondents, but regarding IND, respondents in China and the U.S. did not show significant differences. Hofstede's study (1991) pointed out that since individuals are different in their manifestations of individualism and collectivism, when we measure individualism and collectivism at the individual level, they should be divided into separate dimensions. Hence, in this study, two subscales were adapted to measure IND and INT. After validity tests, both scales of Cronbach's alpha are greater than .70, within an acceptable range, and the correlation of IND and INT was .441. However, when Sharm (2009) used the same scale in his study, the correlation was -.42, which contrasts with the correlation of measured IND and INT in the current study. The intercoder reliability test was conducted by another researcher. The IND and INT were also a positive correlation for both Chinese and U.S. respondents.

In previous studies, IND and INT were positively correlated. For example, Chung's (2016) study used two dimensional scales (i.e. individualism and collectivism) which are different from Sharma's (2009) when measuring cultural orientation, finding that there was no significant difference between South Koreans and Americans in interdependent, but the U.S. ( $M = 5.03$ ) reported a higher IND than South Korea ( $M = 4.48$ ). In the current study, Chinese

reported more INT than American respondents, but there was no difference between Chinese and Americans in IND. In the results, we see that cultural orientation had a partial mediated effect on the influence of national differences on the self-expression motivation of the profile picture selection but not on the other motivations. It appears that even if cultural orientation has an effect on the profile picture selection, the effects of national differences for all motivations are difficult to offset.

This study's finding helped to support the previous study that cultural orientation cannot purely belong to Individualism or Collectivism (Chung, 2016), and agrees with Hofstede (1991, p.90) that "[s]ocieties are composed of a wide variety of individual members, holding a variety of personal values. Tests have shown that a person can score either high on both individualist and collectivist values, high on one kind and low on the other, or low on both." In this way, each country's culture is a combination of two cultural orientations (Triandis, 1993).

From the other side, with the development of globalization and the widespread use of the Internet, persons are influenced not only by people or the culture around them, but by people and cultures far away from them. Newly exposed cultural factors penetrate and blend continuously via increasingly frequent cross-cultural communication, thus exerting a subtle influence on individuals. The original scales used by Sharma were created in 2010, which was eight years before the data were collected in this current study. Cultural environment and international environments changed during this time and may have affected the performance and ideas of people in both countries. From 2009 to 2017, trade between China and the U.S. nearly doubled (Branch, 2018), with more frequent trade exchanges leads to more cultural exchanges. Although mainstream social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, cannot be used in China because of the Internet censorship, increasing commodity exchange, tourism, TV film development, and other

factors will affect personal cultural orientation. Therefore, distinguishing cultural orientation from nationality is more difficult. The process of economic globalization might also lead to cultural globalization. Because cultural globalization is a response imperceptibly influences, the differences between the cultural orientations of individuals may be continuously shrinking. In addition, the occurrence of historical events will also affect people's judgments and their sense of belonging to the collective. Education is considered to play a vital role in political and economic development where independence is a key concept (Leathwood, 2006). Higher education guides students to be more independent. From the demographic information, more than half of the respondents from both China (69.2%) and U.S. (60.7%) reported an education level of undergraduate or higher. The education level might help to explain why Chinese and American respondents did not show significant difference in their IND level and the Chinese respondents' IND mean was even higher than American respondents.

### **Different Types of Profile Pictures**

The second question explored how differences in culture and motivation predict differences in the types of profile pictures users gravitate toward. In order to answer this question, the correlations between culture, motivation, and picture type were calculated. The study found that when Chinese respondents reported a higher degree of INT, they were more likely to choose a picture of a humorous photo as a social media profile picture. Humorous person is usually being welcomed in a group. Persons who like to use humorous photo as their profile pictures like enjoy time with others. Selecting these humorous profile picture types corresponds with the attribution of INT. When respondents report a higher level of IND, they are more likely to choose poses of themselves alone as their profile picture. This corresponds to facts of the characteristics of IND and emphasizes the uniqueness of individuals. This is also similar to

the previous study in which respondents from individualist cultures were more likely to express themselves and their identities directly (Kim & Papacharissi, 2003).

The study found that when American respondents reported a higher degree of INT, they were more likely to choose a picture of a family as a social media profile picture. Family is usually a group of people of which people identified themselves as a member. Selecting a family photo as the profile picture is a representation of groupness and a desire of indicating the group the owner belongs to. Selecting these family profile picture types corresponds with the attribution of INT. When respondents report a higher level of IND, they are more likely to choose the photo related to their interests as their profile picture. However, it is not significantly different. This corresponds to facts of the characteristics of IND that express the opinion about individuals' ego. This is also similar to the previous study in which respondents from individualist cultures were more likely to express themselves and their identities directly (Kim & Papacharissi, 2003).

When we consider the impact of different motivation on profile picture selection, we find that Chinese respondents who report higher self-expression or higher self-awareness motives are more likely to select posing alone profile pictures. Similar to IND, people who have a higher level of self-expression motivation will choose a photo of themselves without any other people in their profile pictures. They use posing alone photos to express themselves and their feelings, and to provide their social media identity. Besides, respondents who report a higher level of social belongingness motivation are more likely to choose sports pictures as their profile pictures. This is similar to the willingness of people with a higher level of INT to present their profile picture. Through the sports photo, people identified themselves as a member of a sports fan group and expressed their willingness to be a member of that group. People who have a higher level of

impression management motivation also willing to select the posing alone when selecting a profile picture. One of the explanations for that is users trying to manage their impression of their own image. The posing alone photo is the best way to show the body image, which can convey the message of personal image. Thus, users trying to use the posing along photo to deliver the message of a better image to fit into the group.

When we consider the impact of different motivations on profile picture selection, we find that American respondents who report higher self-expression motives are also more likely to select posing alone profile pictures, which is similar to IND and Chinese respondents. When selecting profile pictures, people who have a higher level of self-awareness motivation will choose the photo of celebrating the special occasion when selecting a profile picture. Compared to the unique location photo, the photo of celebrating the special occasion is more human-related. It is more about what happens around the profile picture owner. Hence, it shows a relatively higher correlation with self-awareness. In addition, respondents who report a higher level of social belongingness motivation are more likely to choose supporting cause as their profile pictures. The supporting of cause always reveals users group identity. Which represent users' strong belongingness of a specific group. They want all people know their group identity. People who have a higher level of impression management motivation select the photo of celebrating the special occasion when selecting a profile picture. Special occasion photo usually represents the photo took in a specific occasion with background. One of the explanation of that is users' want to enhance the personal image and fit into the group with the help of showing the personal experience.

## Limitations

Although the present study contributes to the emerging body of literature on social motivation and cultural orientation research, and probes into the essence of the motivation of profile picture selection, it is not without limitations. The results of hypothesis four were contrary to our initial idea: the results showed that when they are selecting profile pictures for their favorite social media platform, American users have a higher level of impression management motivation than Chinese users. To measure the impression management, this study used the subscale extracted from Psycho-Social Aspects of Facebook Use (PSAFU), validated by Bodroza and Jovanovic (2016). The original scale was used to measure users' Facebook use behavior. The racial distribution of the sample in Bodroza and Jovanovic's study was not shown, but the main idea of their research is Facebook use, and their respondents were recruited via Facebook. Because Facebook cannot be used in mainland China, the respondents of Bodroza and Jovanovic's study should not have many Chinese, and they did not have respondents who lived in China when they did their survey. Their scale is, therefore, designed for measuring Facebook use in the U.S. Thus, this impression measurement instrument may be more suitable for measuring impression management in independent cultures, not in INT cultures. Therefore, the current study finds that U.S. users present a higher level of impression management, but Chinese users present a relatively lower level of impression management.

The survey investigated the results from 377 respondents from China and the U.S. Although the respondents were recruited randomly, the results are not sufficiently generalizable. A more substantial data might be collected to get more generalizable results. In addition, it is hard for researcher to identify the respondents' effort towards the survey. Although the respondents got the incentive after they finished the survey, they might not pay full attention to

the questions, or they may answer some question half-heartedly. Because the survey did not include screening questions, it is not easy to filter out the answers that do not represent the current situation.

The age group and television use time of respondents in the current study are also limited due to a data-collecting error. The data for age group and television use time were not collected in the Chinese version of the survey. Thus, it was hard to determine the average age of Chinese respondents and their daily television viewing time. However, we know that 31.8% of the respondents were currently enrolled students, who might be around 20 to 30 years old. And the average age of American respondents was 32.6 years. The future study might collect data in a more specific age group to see the differences of profile picture selection by users in different age groups.

## **Implications**

A profile picture is not only a picture, but it is also a portrayal by which people present themselves publicly. Thus, it indicates how the users present themselves and how owners of the pictures want to be interpreted by the public. The findings of the current study have many implications. In the cross-cultural context of China and the U.S., results confirmed that, to a certain extent, cultural and national backgrounds had an impact on the selection of social media profile pictures. Consequently, social media marketers might apply culturally specific strategies to attract more users. For example, in social media where independent users have a relatively large market share, functional development can emphasize more self-expressing social functions and image display functions to attract more users. In addition, image processing companies can also use the research results in functional development that matches their target customers. Specifically, when targeting a market with a high level of INT, they can focus on the



development of functions that can perform multi-person image processing and can provide background settings suitable for multiple people such as in sports and social networking. When targeting the markets with a high level of IND, companies can focus on developing image processing functions that can highlight personal characteristics and satisfy self-expression.

Research question 2 can be seen in a reversed way. By knowing that people who use different types of profile picture might be driven by different motivation or that they present differently in cultural orientations, we might infer that social media users with certain cultural orientation and motivations will choose specific types of profile pictures. These findings might be used in many fields. For instance, in the marketing field, a company can promote its product, which is interdependence orientation targeted, to the users who select a sports photo or family photo as their profile pictures. The profile pictures are public information on social media; that is to say, the content displayed is the imagery that the owner of the profile picture is willing to have interpreted by the public. It is because many products are used to help persons present themselves and build their image, using profile pictures to measure whether they are the suitable targeting segments can be a feasible method.

Future study can focus upon qualitative research to reveals more detail about respondents' motivations while selecting profile pictures. Focus groups might be used to explore the motivation in different cultures and different social media platforms. Besides, content analysis can provide more objective data for analysis without it being influenced by a respondent's mood while completing the survey instrument. The content analysis might also be conducted to collect more data which focuses on question 3: what types of pictures the respondents prefer to use as their profile pictures. The cooperation with computer science

researchers might also be done to explore the cultural orientation predictors of profile pictures type by utilizing big data and visual analysis algorithm.

## Tables

Table 1  
*Items for Questionnaire*

Variable	Item	Original Scale	Style	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
National Identity	1. I feel close to other American/ Chinese people. 2. I have a strong sense of belonging to other American/ Chinese people. 3. If I were to describe myself to someone, one of the first things that I would say is that I'm American/ Chinese.	Three items that adapted from Scottham, Sellers, and Nguyễn's (2008) Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity for teens (MIBI-t)	7-point Likert scale	5.48	1.24	.72(CHN) .89(US)
Independence (IND)	1. I would rather depend on myself than others 2. My personal identity, independent of others, is important to me 3. I rely on myself most of the time, rarely on others 4. It is important that I do my job better than others 5. I enjoy being unique and different from others in many respects.	The subscales adapted from Sharma (2010)	7-point Likert scale	5.70	.83	.73(CHN) .78(US)
Interdependence (INT)	1. The well-being of my group members is important for me 2. I feel good when I cooperate with my group members 3. It is my duty to take care of my family members, whatever it takes 4. Family members should stick together, even if they do not agree 5. I enjoy spending time with my group members	The subscales adapted from Sharma (2010)	7-point Likert scale	5.61	.93	.77(CHN) .84(US)
Self-expression	1. This profile picture reflects who I consider myself to be 2. This profile picture reflects who I am 3. Passing along this profile picture would communicate who I am to other people	This scale adapted from the scale that Taylor, Strutton & Thompson (2012) adapted from Escalas and Bettman	7-point Likert scale	5.13	1.37	.92(CHN) .93(US)

Variable	Item	Original Scale	Style	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
Self-awareness	4. This profile picture is consistent with how I want to present myself to others	(2005) to measure self-expressiveness.				
	5. I can identify with this profile picture					
	1. I reflected about myself	This scale is extracted from Sassenberg, Boos, and Rabung's (2005) private self-awareness scale by Schouten (2007)	5-point Likert scale	3.71	.85	.85(CHN) .81(US)
	2. I thought about what I said					
	3. I was attentive to my inner feelings					
Social belongings	4. I constantly examined my motives					
	1. To find something to talk about	The scale to measure belongingness is adapted from Young and Len-Ríos Young (2017)'s study	5-point Likert scale	3.30	.99	.91(CHN) .66(US)
	2. To get feedback and support from others					
Impression management	3. To feel like I belong to a group					
	1. I try to make a good impression on others by selecting a profile picture	This scale is adapted from a subscale of Psycho-Social Aspects of Facebook Use (PSAFU)	5-point Likert scale	3.61	.86	.93(CHN) .91(US)
	2. I care about the impression others form about me when they see my profile					
	3. Before I select a profile picture, I think about how others might perceive it					
	4. When I select a profile picture, I think about how I would like others to perceive me					
	5. I try to present myself positively on my social media profile especially for those people who do not know me well					
	6. I pay a lot of attention to details of my social media profile, because I want to make a good impression on those who view it					
	7. I select different type of profile pictures on social media to attract the attention of others					
	8. I only post on my profile photos in which I look attractive					

Table 2

*Social Media Platforms*

Social Media Platforms	
1.	Facebook
2.	Instagram
3.	Tumblr
4.	Quora
5.	Twitter
6.	Tinder
7.	Reddit
8.	Weibo
9.	WeChat
10.	RenRen
11.	TanTan
12.	Zhihu
13.	BaiduTieba
14.	Other

*Note.* The above is the social media platforms for users to select their favorite.

Table 3

*Independent samples t-test for national difference on motivations*

Motivation	Nationality	Mean	SD	sig	t	d
Self-expression	Chinese	4.764	1.390	0.000	-5.177*	-0.536
	American	5.475	1.274			
Self-awareness	Chinese	3.752	0.875	0.419	0.810	0.080
	American	3.679	0.853			
Social Belongingness	Chinese	3.343	0.960	0.434	0.783	0.080
	American	3.263	1.017			
Impression Management	Chinese	3.452	0.845	0.001	-3.354*	-0.350
	American	3.746	0.850			

\*  $p < .05$

*The mean for Self-expression is 1-7; the mean for self-awareness, social belongingness, and impression management is 1-5.*

Table 4

*Correlations for Chinese users*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
2	.415*															
3	.349*	.366*														
4	.314*	.309*	.749*													
5	.330*	.217*	.616*	.553*												
6	.308*	.321*	.570*	.465*	.608*											
7	.204*	.240*	.353*	.219*	.282*	.321*										
8	.024	.288*	.394*	.244*	.256*	.323*	.566*									
9	.119	.237*	.337*	.197*	.239*	.304*	.562*	.574*								
10	.131	.167*	.262*	.273*	.154*	.266*	.353*	.386*	.527*							
11	.162*	.220*	.351*	.325*	.248*	.268*	.404*	.533*	.646*	.427*						
12	.167*	.268*	.323*	.281*	.199*	.226*	.498*	.573*	.747*	.456*	.669*					
13	.260*	.231*	.420*	.354*	.293*	.413*	.502*	.581*	.556*	.379*	.477*	.645*				
14	.163*	.294*	.369*	.224*	.311*	.301*	.541*	.573*	.584*	.352*	.523*	.608*	.585*			
15	.107	.277*	.316*	.245*	.299*	.298*	.575*	.636*	.465*	.299*	.530*	.590*	.594*	.594*		
16	.136	.291*	.099	.208*	.107	.139	.164*	.193*	.341*	.475*	.231*	.312*	.225*	.237*	.241*	
17	.151*	.307*	.124	.156*	.139	.154*	.229*	.151*	.279*	.264*	.131	.214*	.110	.275*	.208*	.385*

Note. “\*” represent  $p < .05$

1= Independence, 2 = Interdependence;

3 = Self-expression, 4 = Self-awareness, 5 = Social belongingness, 6 = Impression management; 7 = Socializing, 8 = Romantic

picture, 9 = Unique location, 10 = Supporting cause, 11 = Face shot, 12 = Special occasion, 13 = Posing alone, 14 = Playing sports, 15

= Family, 16 = Interests, 17 = Humorous shot

*Correlations for American users*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
2	.443*															
3	.293*	.414*														
4	.254*	.377*	.576*													
5	.061	.437*	.342*	.615*												
6	.183*	.426*	.618*	.653*	.647*											
7	.071	.368*	.256*	.285*	.383*	.279*										
8	.034	.285*	.177*	.263*	.360*	.263*	.627*									
9	.084	.198*	.314*	.286*	.257*	.320*	.502*	.406*								
10	.110	.316*	.244*	.282*	.390*	.363*	.599*	.606*	.383*							
11	.110	.289*	.311*	.264*	.261*	.318*	.371*	.369*	.364*	.308*						
12	.080	.342*	.317*	.316*	.373*	.364*	.605*	.597*	.498*	.633*	.461*					
13	.129	.106	.328*	.221*	.123	.229*	.257*	.283*	.423*	.275*	.614*	.404*				
14	.120	.316*	.130	.293*	.359*	.182*	.568*	.609*	.389*	.565*	.347*	.472*	.205*			
15	.039	.375*	.215*	.217*	.367*	.266*	.585*	.669*	.420*	.565*	.374*	.643*	.269*	.522*		
16	.125	.293*	.224*	.215*	.127	.230*	.336*	.193*	.330*	.236*	.129	.284*	.073	.246*	.177*	
17	.105	.240*	.151*	.117	.262*	.178*	.344*	.219*	.233*	.264*	.046	.213*	-.003	.310*	.200*	.284*

*Note.* “\*” represent  $p < .05$

1= Independence, 2 = Interdependence;

3 = Self-expression, 4 = Self-awareness, 5 = Social belongingness, 6 = Impression management; 7 = Socializing, 8 = Romantic

picture, 9 = Unique location, 10 = Supporting cause, 11 = Face shot, 12 = Special occasion, 13 = Posing alone, 14 = Playing sports, 15

= Family, 16 = Interests, 17 = Humorous shot

Table 5

*Media spend time and favorite social media*

	Chinese				American			
	Mean	SD	N	%	Mean	SD	N	%
<b>Media Time</b>								
Social media	3.195	2.255	169		2.364	2.084	198	
TV	-	-	-		2.167	2.233	198	
Music/radio/podcasts	1.389	1.968	172		1.6922	2.001	198	
Books	1.091	1.164	172		.945	1.262	199	
Movies	1.045	1.010	172		1.255	1.507	198	
Newspaper								
Magazine	.226	.510	172		.608	1.236	199	
Video games	.591	1.307	172		1.260	1.675	199	
Others	.678	1.314	171		.677	1.561	198	
<b>Favorite Media</b>								
Facebook			-	-			126	61.5
Instagram			-	-			29	14.1
Tumblr			-	-			2	1
Quora			-	-			-	-
Twitter			-	-			18	8.8
Tinder			-	-			-	-
Reddit			-	-			27	13.1
Weibo			43	25			-	-
Wechat			90	52.3			-	-
RenRen			2	.6			-	-
TanTan			-	-			-	-
Zhihu			8	4.7			-	-
BaiduTieba			2	1.2			-	-
Other			28	16.3			3	1.5
<b>Cultural Orientation</b>								
IND	5.794*	.710	172		5.630*	.780	205	
INT	5.759*	.780	172		5.481*	1.032	205	
<b>Education</b>								
No schooling and high school			15	8.7			20	9.8
Some college			38	22.1			60	29.4
Undergraduate			82	47.7			88	43.1
Graduate			37	21.5			36	17.6

Note. “\*” represents  $p < .05$



Table 6

*Summary of Simple Regression Analyses for Cultural Orientation Variables Predicting Social Motivations*

		Self-expression				Self-awareness				Social Belongingness				Impression Management			
Cultural Orientation		<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t
IND	China	.465	.150	.238*	3.108	.276	.097	.224*	2.851	.355	.106	.263*	3.337	.252	.093	.211*	2.695
	US	.190	.099	.136	1.923	.100	.067	.108	1.488	-.183	.078	-.164*	-2.355	-.006	-.066	-.007	-.096
INT	China	.475	.136	.267*	3.488	.243	.088	.216*	2.754	.199	.097	.162*	2.051	.252	.085	.233*	2.971
	US	.437	.088	.354*	4.991	.272	.060	.330*	4.552	.502	.069	.510*	7.307	.353	.059	.429*	6.025
Adjusted <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	All				.126				.136				.135				.119
	China				.171				.127				.120				.130
	US				.179				.143				.205				.173
<i>F</i>	All				27.919*				30.506*				30.355*				26.301*
	China				18.617*				13.425*				12.698*				13.731*
	US				23.070*				17.987*				27.173*				22.255*

Note. “\*” represent  $p < .05$

Table 7

*Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for national identity on motivations*

Motivation	Nationality	<i>df</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>eta</i>	<i>p</i>
Self-expression	Chinese	13	2.39	0.41	0.006
	American	18	3.04	0.48	0.000
Self-awareness	Chinese	13	3.86	0.49	0.000
	American	18	3.66	0.51	0.000
Social Belongingness	Chinese	13	3.14	0.45	0.000
	American	18	3.62	0.51	0.000
Impression Management	Chinese	13	3.30	0.46	0.000
	American	18	2.82	0.46	0.000

*Note.* “\*” represent  $p < .05$

Table 8

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Cultural Orientation Variables Predicting Self-expression*

	Chinese ( $N = 172$ )								American ( $N = 205$ )							
	Model 1				Model 2				Model 1				Model 2			
	$B$	$SE\ B$	$\beta$	$t$	$B$	$SE\ B$	$\beta$	$t$	$B$	$SE\ B$	$\beta$	$t$	$B$	$SE(B)$	$\beta$	$t$
National Identity	.11	.04	.22*	2.97	.01	.04	.01	.12	.10	.02	.34*	5.07	.05	.12	.15	1.92
IND					.46	.15	.24*	3.04					.18	.10	.13	1.84
INT					.47	.15	.23*	3.09					.34	.10	.28*	3.39
$R^2$		.04				.17				.11				.19		
$F$		8.82*				13.46*				11.08*				25.70*		
change in $R^2$																

*Note.* “\*” represent  $p < .05$

Table 9

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Cultural Orientation Variables Predicting Self-awareness*

	Chinese (N = 172)								American (N = 205)							
	Model 1				Model 2				Model 1				Model 2			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	$\beta$	t
National Identity	.07	.02	.20*	2.72	.01	.03	.03	.32	.07	.01	.33*	4.92	.03	.02	.16*	2.12
IND					.27	.01	.22*	2.76					.09	.07	.10	1.39
INT					.23	.01	.20*	2.34					.20	.07	.24*	2.92
$R^2$		.04				.12				.10				.16		
<i>F</i>		7.40*				9.34*				24.20*				7.65*		
change in $R^2$																

*Note.* “\*” represent  $p < .05$

Table 10

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Cultural Orientation Variables Predicting Social Belongingness*

	Chinese (N = 172)								American (N = 205)							
	Model 1				Model 2				Model 1				Model 2			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	$\beta$	t
National Identity	.10	.03	.30*	4.02	.06	.03	.17*	2.06	.10	.02	.40*	6.16	.06	.02	.23*	3.16
IND					.32	.11	.24*	3.00					-.20	.08	-.18*	-2.56
INT					.11	.11	.09	.99					.38	.08	.39*	4.89
$R^2$		.08				.14				.15				.24		
$F$		16.17*				6.46*				37.89*				12.32*		
change in $R^2$																

*Note.* “\*” represent  $p < .05$

Table 11

*Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Cultural Orientation Variables Predicting Impression Management*

	Chinese (N = 172)								American (N = 205)							
	Model 1				Model 2				Model 1				Model 2			
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	t	<i>B</i>	<i>SE(B)</i>	$\beta$	t
National Identity	.12	.02	.39*	5.50	.08	.03	.28*	3.39	.07	.01	.34*	5.13	.03	.02	.15	1.96
IND					.20	.09	.17*	2.20					-.01	.07	-.01	-.20
INT					.12	.09	.11	1.31					.29	.07	.35*	4.27
$R^2$		.15				.18				.11				.19		
$F$		30.28*				4.57*				26.30*				10.15*		
change in $R^2$																

*Note.* “\*” represent  $p < .05$

Figures

Figure 1.

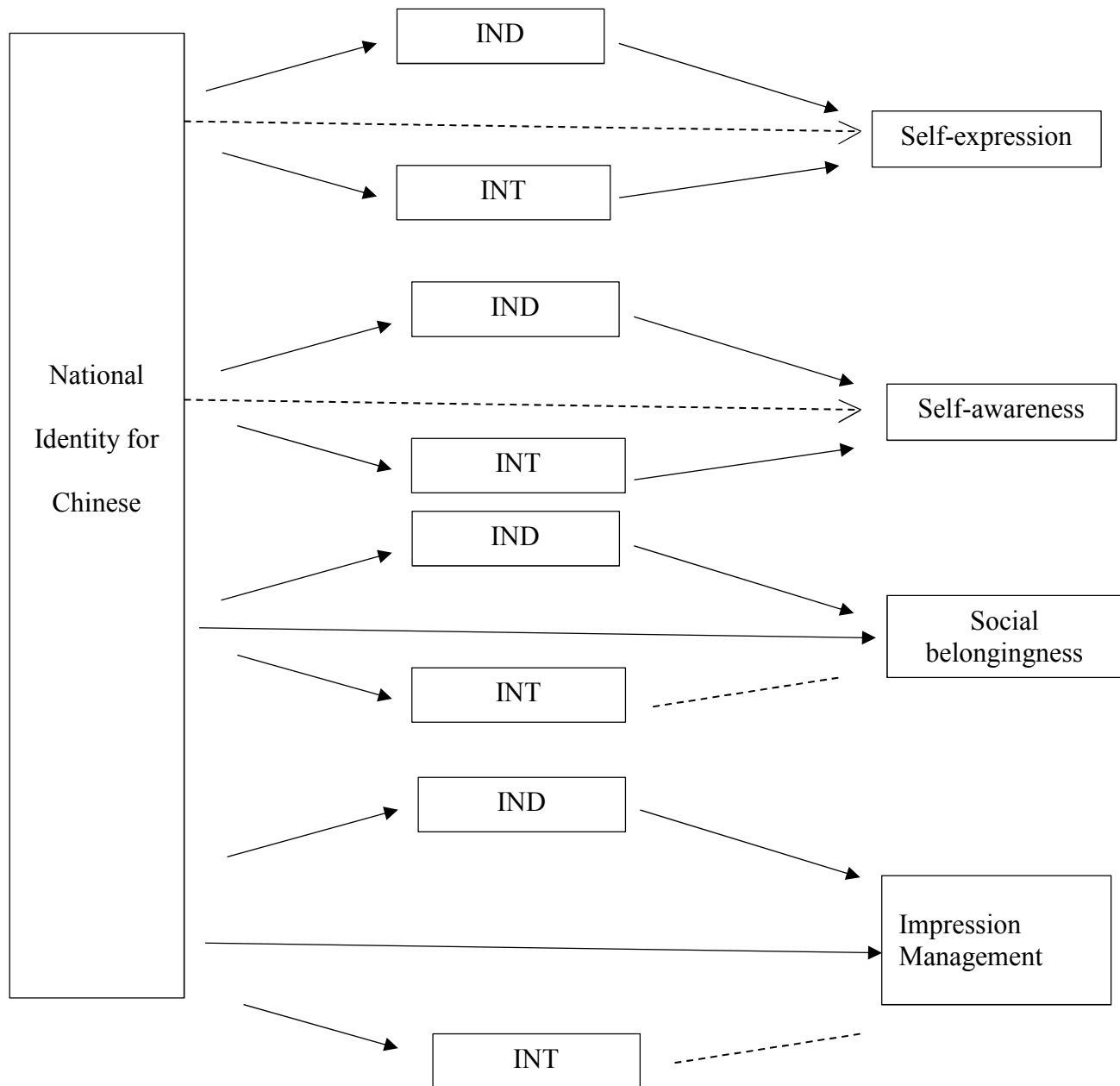
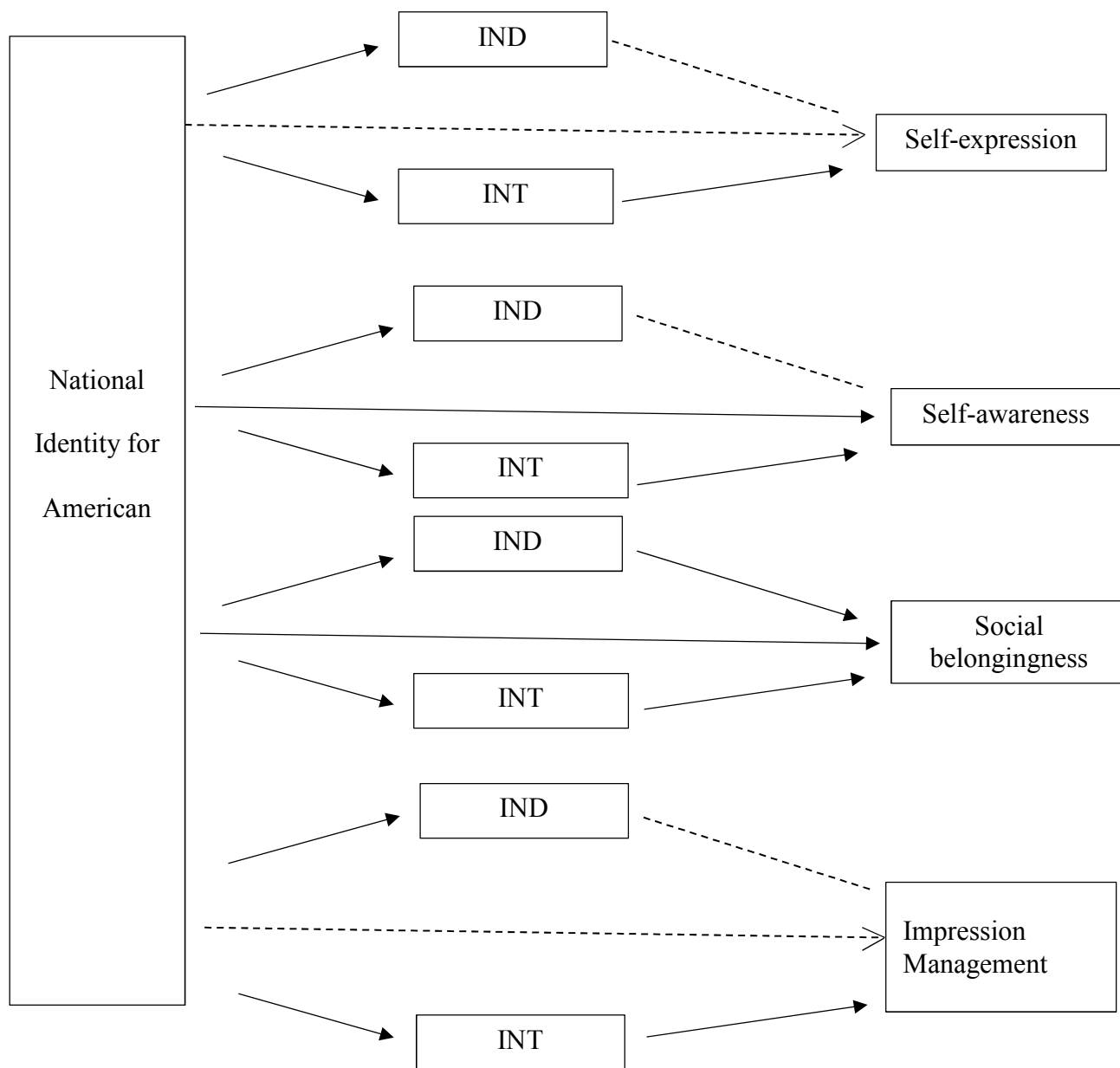


Figure 2.





## Appendix

Recruit information:

English:

Are you a social media user? Would you like to participate in the study? We are conducting a study about profile picture selecting motivation and looking for participants of American or Chinese nationalities living in the United States. You will be asked a series of questions regarding your demographics, social media use, and your general motivations for choosing profile pictures on different platforms. The survey will take less than 15 minutes. You will be rewarded \$1.50 for your time. To be considered eligible for this study, you must currently live in the U.S. and report American or Chinese nationality, aged over 18, and have social media account(s).

Chinese:

你是社交媒体用户吗？你想参加这项研究吗？我们正在做一个关于社交媒体用户头像选择动机的研究需要寻找现居中国并且国籍为中国或者美国的社交媒体用户进行调研。你将回答关于你的基本信息、社交媒体使用情况、以及选择不同社交媒体的头像时的动机的一些列问题。调查问卷不会占用你不到十五分钟的时间，并且你可以得到¥5 的奖励。参加本次调查者需要是是年龄大于或等于 18 岁，拥有社交媒体账号，并现居于中国的中国或者美国公民。

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## Vita

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## EDUCATION

**Master of Arts** (Aug 2016 - Dec 2018) in Media Studies at Syracuse University, NY  
Thesis title: “Differences in Social Media Profile Picture Selection Motivation: A Comparison Between Chinese and U.S. Users”

**Bachelor of Arts** (Sep 2011- Jun 2015) in Media and Communications at China Agricultural University, Beijing, China.

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**Research Assistant**, Jan 2017 - Dec 2018, Syracuse University, NY  
eHealth literacy program, Ad avoidance program, social media digital video program

- Compiled background information and literature
- Assisted in theoretical framework and project development
- Assisted sort out and analyze data

**Editorial Assistant Intern**, Fall 2018, Xinhuanet North America, NY

- Created marketing campaigns for interested organizations and businesses
- Managed the social media accounts for Xinhuanet North America
- Interviewed the expert and compiled for industry reports

## CONFERENCE PAPERS

Lobo, A., **Jiang, R.**, Yu, J. (2017). *The Weibo Olympic: Factors Influencing Chinese Users Engagement with Sports News on Social Media*. The 2017 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference in Chicago, IL, Aug 2017.

Chew, F., Egan, B., Mohan, C., **Jiang, R.**, Suresh, S., Joshi, K., Dabre, R. (2018). *Predicting TV audience viewership during commercial breaks through the application of neural networks*. The 2016 Broadcast Education Association Conference in Las Vegas, NV, Apr 2018.

Chew, F., Egan, B., Mohan, C., **Jiang, R.**, Suresh, S., Joshi, K., Dabre, R. (2018). *Applying artificial neural networks to predict ad viewership during TV programs*. The 2018 Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication Conference in Washington D.C., Aug 2018.

Chew, F., **Jiang, R.** (2018). *Assessing the Impact of Social Support and ehealth Literacy on the Health Status of Older Adults*. The 2018 Midwest Association for Public Opinion Research Conference in Chicago, IL, Nov 2018.

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Outstanding Undergraduate Student of Beijing, Beijing Municipal Commission of Education, Beijing, China, Jun 2015.